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The Uses and Limits of Small-Scale Military Interventions

Stephen Watts, Caroline Baxter, Molly Dunigan, Christopher Rizzi

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Preface

This monograph documents the results of a project entitled “Minimalist Stabilization.” The project aimed to assess the utility and limitations of small-scale interventions in ongoing conflicts and to propose policy recommendations concerning the circumstances under which minimalist stabilization missions may be appropriate and the strategies most likely to make such interventions successful, as well as the implications for U.S. Army force structure debates and partnership strategies.

The monograph is written for a general audience, although it is likely to be of particular interest to those in the defense analytical community, both civilian and military, concerned with stability operations, counterinsurgency, and security force assistance.

This study is a product of the RAND Corporation’s continuing program of self-initiated independent research. Support for such research is provided, in part, by donors and by the independent research and development provisions of RAND’s contracts for the operation of its U.S. Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers. This research was conducted within the RAND Arroyo Center’s Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program. RAND Arroyo Center, part of the RAND Corporation, is a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the United States Army.

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Summary

The enormous costs of the American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan have inevitably sparked a backlash against military interventions generally, especially as the magnitude of the American fiscal crisis has become apparent. While many critics of “nation-building” argue that the United States should abandon military interventions altogether, others continue to accept that such interventions may be necessary to secure U.S. interests. Where the United States went wrong, these latter critics claim, is in the scale of its ambitions and the concomitant ways and means adopted to achieve them. These critics argue that, rather than seeking to transform the domestic politics of foreign countries—a utopian or at least prohibitively costly goal—the United States should commit only the minimum resources necessary to stabilize the target state. Such small-scale interventions—what we in this volume term “minimalist stabilization”—supposedly offer the opportunity to secure core U.S. interests at vastly less cost than larger nation-building missions.

At stake in this debate are not only future decisions about military interventions but also present-day choices about U.S. force reductions. Despite these enormous stakes, the debate remains poorly structured, and little systematic empirical evidence has been offered in support of many of the claims on either side.

Research Approach

This study systematically examines the record of military interventions in the past four decades, combining a simple quantitative assessment of all interventions in that period with more in-depth studies of four cases of minimalist stabilization.

The quantitative analysis is based on a dataset that includes the most comprehensive known compilation of stabilization missions conducted over the past 40 years. The full range of stabilization missions includes operations launched on behalf of governments and operations that are neutral between the government and armed opposition, and it includes operations launched both during the period of active conflict and in the immediate post-conflict period. The analysis in this study focuses on a particularly relevant subset of stabilizing missions: those deployed on behalf of an embattled government during the period of active fighting. Because the number of cases of such minimalist stabilization operations since 1970 is so few (22 cases in conflicts that have come to a conclusion), this study emphasizes a simple, transparent analytical approach over more sophisticated quantitative methodologies that are highly sensitive to how small numbers of cases are categorized.

The quantitative analysis is combined with a series of case studies. The case studies enable readers to understand the reasons why minimalist stabilization operations result in the outcomes they do, and they allow for a much more nuanced examination of the quality of those outcomes. The case studies represent a variety of background conditions, and they comprise approximately one-sixth of all cases of minimalist stabilization missions launched on behalf of embattled governments in the past four decades. For both of these reasons, the case studies represent a strong basis on which to judge general trends in minimalist stabilization, particularly when combined with the quantitative results.

Findings

The quantitative analysis finds that minimalist stabilization missions launched on behalf of governments fighting insurgencies do *not* contribute significantly to a partner government's odds of winning the conflict. They *do*, however, substantially improve a partner government's chances of avoiding defeat. This apparent contradiction is explained by the enormous increase in the number of mixed outcomes—that is, cases in which conflicts become mired in military stalemate or terminate with negotiated settlements that concede considerable political and security rights to the insurgents.

The qualitative analyses provide important insights into why this pattern of outcomes results from minimalist stabilization. Typically minimalist stabilization contributes to significant operational successes (such as degrading insurgent capabilities) but not to decisive gains. In the cases of the U.S. operations in the Philippines and Colombia over the past decade, for instance, insurgents have experienced a number of setbacks, but in both cases the government appears to be nearing a “floor” beneath which it is difficult to continue reducing the insurgents. In the case of U.S. support to the government of El Salvador in the late Cold War period, American assistance ensured that the government would not fall to Communist forces, but it was incapable of bringing the conflict to an end. Instead, the war became mired in a bloody and prolonged stalemate—an outcome that appears common in cases of minimalist stabilization. Finally, in the case of French intervention on behalf of the government of the Central African Republic, a number of coup attempts were thwarted, but almost as soon as international forces departed, the coup attempts resumed, leading to the overthrow of the government within two years. These cases suggest that only with a more fundamental change in the politics or international context of a conflict does decisive success become likely.

Policy Implications

These findings do not yield simple policy prescriptions. They do, however, caution against viewing minimalist stabilization as a panacea. Modest resource commitments generally yield modest results. In some circumstances such modest results will be adequate to secure important U.S. interests. In other cases they will not, and in some cases the under-resourcing of interventions may have catastrophic results.

This assessment provokes three questions: (1) What is the value of minimalist stabilization? (2) what can be done to improve the chances of achieving durable, strategic success? and (3) what are the implications for U.S. defense policy, particularly for defense restructuring debates and partnership strategies?

The Value of Minimalist Stabilization

What is the value of minimalist intervention if it can improve the odds of avoiding defeat but can seldom secure victory? The answer depends on the context of the intervention. Although there is no single formula, a number of rules of thumb are evident from our analyses:

- Avoiding defeat may secure at least minimal U.S. objectives if the loyalty of the client government is the United States' greatest concern.
- Minimalist intervention on behalf of a government in an ongoing conflict may secure U.S. interests if the United States is not opposed to a compromise that would offer the insurgents real political power and security guarantees. In some cases, insurgents will have to be convinced that they cannot achieve military victory before they will be willing to negotiate. In these instances minimalist intervention may shift insurgents' estimates of the likelihood of victory and the costs of continued fighting, thereby inducing them to compromise.
- Minimalist stabilization may be a useful instrument of foreign policy if a prolonged period of low-level violence is an acceptable outcome. The critical question is whether an insurgency, once degraded and contained, will stay degraded and contained. If not,

then either the United States must commit to a semipermanent intervention in the conflict or it risks having done no more than temporarily ameliorating the problem.

- Finally, minimalist stabilization may be appropriate if there is little concern about the “externalities” of prolonged conflict. Civil wars are associated with refugee flows, the spread of disease, depressed licit economic activity in neighboring states, the flourishing of transnational criminal networks, the incubation of transnational terrorist movements, the spread of instability and conflict into neighboring countries, and a variety of other ills. Intervening states may be willing to accept such costs to maintain a partner government in power. Such decisions should be made, however, only after careful consideration of the possible spillover effects. It may well be that the unintended second-order effects are worse than the crisis that motivated the intervention.

Improving the Probability of Success

How might minimalist stabilization operations be conducted or combined with other instruments to improve the chances of transforming operational into durable strategic successes? Minimalist stabilization’s odds of success might be improved through three means: (i) carefully choosing the circumstances in which such interventions are launched, (ii) combining them with nonmilitary instruments to improve their effectiveness, and (iii) committing to stabilizing the eventual peace.

The analysis was not structured to provide a fine-grained understanding of the precise conditions under which minimalist stabilization would be most likely to succeed. Both the analysis here and prior research, however, suggest at least three contexts in which minimalist stabilization appears to be particularly effective:

- Minimalist stabilization appears most likely to improve a government’s odds of victory when both the government and the insurgents are weak. In such contexts small forces from outside may be enough to tip the balance decisively. Of course, strong states with the will to fight an insurgency are even more likely to do well. But

this may be a case of intervention working best where it is least needed.

- Minimalist stabilization may be appropriate if there is a realistic opportunity to interdict insurgents' resource streams. In most cases, however, such interdiction is difficult or impossible, as the examples of Colombia and Afghanistan attest.
- Finally, minimalist interventions might be usefully targeted on states where a realistic path to a negotiated settlement is visible but requires outside intervention to secure. Although this study has not focused on peace operations, minimalist forces may be fully adequate to conduct consensual peacekeeping missions.

The odds of success might also be improved by combining minimalist operations with nonmilitary instruments:

- Many insurgencies ended rapidly—and the post-conflict periods remained highly stable—when insurgents lost outside state sponsorship. Such a path to conflict termination usually requires a diplomatic process in which the external powers with an interest in the conflict are able to secure their core interests in a negotiated settlement. Multilateral processes may also play a critical role in denying insurgents proceeds from contraband, such as the Kimberley Process that has been created to restrict the sale of so-called “conflict diamonds.”
- The other potentially critical function for nonmilitary instruments is binding partner governments to critical reforms. Foreign assistance may provide a government with enough resources to alleviate internal pressures for reform but too few resources to enable fundamental changes. The result would be stagnation—a phenomenon commonly observed and criticized within the development community. There are a number of instruments that have been devised to try to tie assistance more closely to reform efforts, including embedding foreign personnel within the partner state's government, setting up trust funds or other financial instruments that require certain standards to be met before money is disbursed, and so on. Perhaps most critical, however, is the cred-

ibility of the intervening state's threat to "walk away" if key conditions are not met.

- Finally, the odds of a successful outcome might be improved by long-term commitments to the partner state. The fact that most minimalist interventions lead to stalemate or negotiated settlements—outcomes that are historically precarious and frequently lead to renewed fighting—suggests that the need for stabilization missions does not end with the end of conflict but endures well into the post-conflict period. Such peace operations, however, are being almost completely ignored in the current defense debates.

Implications for U.S. Partnership Strategies

U.S. partnership strategies should reflect the potential and the limitations of minimalist stabilization.

Because lengthy stabilization missions can place significant stress on U.S. forces, whenever possible the United States should seek to enlist other partners in such missions. One promising model is a "hybrid" approach used in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In these missions a large number of mostly lower-quality forces in United Nations peace operations were combined with a small number of forces from Great Britain or France. The higher-quality North Atlantic Treaty Organization troops could either serve as a "maneuver force" capable of interceding in high-risk flashpoints themselves or help to organize local forces to do the same, while the remainder of the international troops provided the "holding forces" to stabilize other parts of the country. Such a model would reduce the expense of long-term, large-scale stabilizing missions and reduce the stress on U.S. forces.

Any time the United States helps to build the military capacity of other countries, it is critical that it put in place safeguards to ensure as best as possible that its assistance is not abused. Partner governments may be emboldened by American support to take inadvisable risks, and partner governments may use their military capabilities for ultimately self-defeating repression. In interventions in which large numbers of U.S. ground forces are present, such risks can be reduced. In minimalist interventions, these risks are elevated. The United States should

make clear its “red lines” in such cases and make clear that there are extremely serious repercussions for violations of those limits.

Implications for U.S. Defense Restructuring

Minimalist stabilization operations yield a reasonable chance of modest success for a modest cost. In some circumstances such instruments are perfectly appropriate and indeed should be the preferred tools to realize U.S. foreign policy goals. But they are no panacea. In many cases military instruments should be avoided altogether. And in the worst environments, from the evidence currently available, large-scale interventions appear to provide the highest probability of securing a minimally acceptable outcome. Where critical U.S. interests are at stake, the United States may again decide that such operations are the least-bad option. Such a conclusion is not meant to minimize the enormous costs—both monetary and human—of such operations, or to claim that the United States has finally “gotten it right” when conducting such operations. But it is meant to suggest that the United States would be accepting extremely high risk if it based its defense capabilities on the premise that it can secure its critical interests through minimalist stabilization operations alone. The United States may choose to accept such risk in the interests of fiscal balance, but if it does, it should do so with full understanding of the possible consequences.

This study is a first step in understanding both the potential and the limitations of minimalist stabilization. Further research is required to understand the specific strategies and circumstances that might maximize the potential of this approach. Minimalist stabilization may offer an important foreign policy tool, particularly when embedded in an appropriate strategy and targeted on the cases where it is likely to have the most impact. The results of this study suggest, however, that there are significant limits to what minimalist stabilization can accomplish. The contemporary defense debates in the United States should be cognizant of these limitations and avoid the tendency—evident in history—to escape the mistakes of large interventions only by expecting too much of small ones.

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Abbreviations

AFDL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire)
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AIS	Armée Islamique du Salut
ANC	African National Congress
AQIM	Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb
ARMM	Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BPC	building partner capacity
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
CAFGUs	Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Units
CAR	Central African Republic
CCAI	Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral
CMO	civil-military operation
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CPI-M	Communist Party of India (Marxist)

CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CT	counterterrorist
DoD	Department of Defense
ELN	National Liberation Army
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERP	Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo
ESAF	El Salvadoran Armed Forces
FACA	Armed Forces of Central Africa
FAES	Fuerza Armada de El Salvador (Armed Forces of El Salvador)
FAL	Communist Party's Armed Forces of Liberation
FAN	Habre's Armored Forces of the North
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
FARF	Forces Armees por la Republique Federale
FDR	Revolutionary Democratic Front
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front
FLNC	Front pour la Libération Nationale du Congo (Front for the National Liberation of the Congo)
FMLN	Farabunda Marti National Liberation Front
FPL	Fuerzas Populares de Liberacion Farabundo Marti
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Liberation Front of Mozambique)

FROLINAT	Front de Libération Nationale du Tchad (National Liberation Front of Chade)
FRUD	Front pour la Restoration de l'Unité et de la Démocratie (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy)
FSLN	<i>Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional</i>
FUNCINPEC	Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant Neutre Pacifique Et Coopératif (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia)
GAO	United States Government Accountability Office
GDP	gross domestic product
GIA	Armed Islamic Group
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDF	Israeli Defense Force
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines
JTF	Joint Task Force
JVP	People's Liberation Front of Sri Lanka
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
LCE	Liaison Coordination Element

LDF	Lofa Defense Force
LPC	Liberia Peace Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Party
MCC	Maoist Communist Centre
MDJT	Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad
MEDCAP	Medical Civil Action Plan
MEK	Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (People's Mujahedin of Iran)
MFDC	Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance)
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MINURCA	U.N. Mission in the Central African Republic
MISAB	Inter-African Mission on Intervention and Surveillance of the Bangui Accord
MQM	Muttahida Quami Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NPA	National People's Army
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NRA	National Resistance Army
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OEF-A	Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan
OEF-P	Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom

ONDCP	White House Office of National Drug Control Policy
OPAT	Operational Planning and Assistance Team
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PCCP	Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PJAK	The Party of Free Life of Kurdistan
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PRTC	Workers Revolution Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PWG	People's War Group
RCD	Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (Rally for Congolese Democracy)
RENAMO	Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana (Mozambican National Resistance Movement)
RN	National Resistance
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SNM	Somali National Movement
SOC PAC	United States Special Operations Command
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army

SPLM	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
UCDP/PRIO	Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
UN	United Nations
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
UPF	United People's Front of Nepal
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USP	Unite de securite presidentelle
USPACOM	United States Pacific Command
UTO	United Tajik Opposition
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement
WDI	World Development Indicator
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

Introduction

The enormous costs of the American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan have inevitably sparked a backlash against military interventions generally, especially as the magnitude of the American fiscal crisis has become apparent. Many critics argue that the United States should abandon efforts to stabilize extremely weak and failed states altogether. They insist that these states pose much less of a security threat to the United States than was often claimed in the days after the September 11 attacks, and they point to Iraq and Afghanistan as evidence of the disappointing returns to “nation-building” missions.

Other observers are equally critical of the nation-building concept, but they accept that extremely weak and failed states do, in fact, pose significant threats to U.S. interests. They also accept that military intervention may be necessary to secure those interests. Where the United States went wrong, these critics claim, is in the scale of its ambitions and the concomitant ways and means adopted to achieve them. Rather than seeking to transform the domestic politics of foreign countries—a utopian or at least prohibitively costly goal—the United States should commit only the minimum resources necessary to stabilize the target state. Such small-scale interventions—what we in this volume term “minimalist stabilization”—supposedly offer the opportunity to secure core U.S. interests at vastly less cost than larger nation-building missions. Proponents typically cite recent American interventions such as Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines (OEF-P) and U.S. support for Plan Colombia as successful applications of minimalist stabilization. Although the new U.S. Defense Strategic Guidance did not

use the term *minimalist stabilization*, it endorsed this approach when it declared that “[w]henever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches.”¹

This debate is a critically important one. At stake are not only future decisions about military interventions but also present-day choices about U.S. military capabilities. Despite these enormous stakes, the debate remains poorly structured, and little systematic empirical evidence has been offered in support of many of the claims on either side.

While the reaction against the disappointments and tremendous costs of Iraq and Afghanistan is understandable and in many ways healthy, there is a risk of “overlearning” the lessons of these conflicts and simply making a different set of mistakes in the future. The current backlash against nation-building is not new; similar reactions followed the Vietnam War and the crises of the peace operations of the 1990s. Each time the United States has careened between “maximalist” and “minimalist” approaches to intervention without a clear understanding of what each can accomplish and the conditions under which each is likely to succeed.

This study systematically examines the record of military interventions in ongoing conflicts in the past four decades, combining a simple quantitative assessment of all interventions in that period with more in-depth studies of four cases of minimalist stabilization. We find that minimalist stabilization missions launched on behalf of governments fighting insurgencies do *not* contribute significantly to a partner government’s odds of winning the conflict. They *do*, however, substantially improve a partner government’s chances of avoiding defeat. This apparent contradiction is explained by the enormous increase in the number of mixed outcomes—that is, cases in which conflicts become mired in military stalemate or terminate with negotiated settlements that concede considerable political and security rights to the insurgents. Typically minimalist stabilization contributes to significant operational successes (such as degrading insurgent capabilities) but not

¹ United States Department of Defense, “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, January 2012, p. 6.

to enduring strategic gains. Only with a more fundamental change in the politics or international context of a conflict does strategic success become likely.

These findings do not yield simple policy prescriptions. Whether policymakers choose minimalist stabilization, a large-scale operation, or no intervention at all depends on the context and the strategic interests at stake. These findings do, however, caution against viewing minimalist stabilization as a panacea. Modest resource commitments generally yield modest results. In some circumstances such modest results will be adequate to secure important U.S. interests. In other cases they will not, and in some cases the under-resourcing of interventions may have catastrophic results. This study is a first step in understanding both the potential and the limitations of minimalist stabilization.

The remainder of this chapter first describes the evolution of the policy debates on interventions in the wake of Iraq and Afghanistan, explores the concept of *minimalist stabilization*, then explains the study's approach to evaluating the empirical record of military interventions over the past four decades. The following chapter sets out the arguments for and against minimalist stabilization. The third chapter provides a simple quantitative analysis of all cases of civil wars or insurgencies² in the era since decolonization. Chapter Four explores four cases of minimalist stabilization—El Salvador, Colombia, the Philippines, and the Central African Republic (CAR)—in greater depth. A final chapter concludes by exploring the policy implications of this analysis.

Background: Weak and Failed States and the Problem of Intervention

Weariness with Large-Scale Nation-Building

The September 11 attacks brought home the global security implications of weak and failed states in a way that the violence of the 1990s never had. For years, observers had highlighted the potential for vio-

² We use the terms *civil wars* and *insurgencies* interchangeably.

lence and instability to spill over borders. These spillover effects—sometimes called the “security externalities” of state weakness—potentially included mass refugee flows, pandemic disease, transnational organized crime, depressed regional economic activity, the facilitation of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and, of course, transnational terrorism.³ Many observers, however, believed that the international community could and should contain these spillover effects rather than undertaking the much more costly alternative of intervention to reduce or eliminate the underlying instability. It was not until September 11 that the security risks of state weakness and failure were elevated to a core security concern of the United States. This new perspective was embodied in the frequently cited passage from the United States’ 2002 National Security Strategy in which it was claimed that “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.”⁴

A decade and two major wars later, the United States has grown weary of the enormous costs—both in lives and dollars—implied by a strategy premised on strengthening weak states. Many observers have criticized the concept of state failure itself, while others have argued that the security implications of state failure for the United States have often been exaggerated.⁵ Others have criticized the “militarization” or “securitization” of what they claim should be an issue best addressed by the development community. Yet another camp, however, accepts that state weakness and failure can pose significant risks to core U.S. security interests, and they accept that a military response may be justified, at least in some instances. U.S. strategy did not misapprehend the nature of the threat nor the nature of the tools required to respond to the threat. Where the United States went wrong, these analysts claim,

³ See for example Paul Collier, V. L. Elliott, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Policy Development*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003.

⁴ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p. 1.

⁵ Anne L. Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternative to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010; Stewart Patrick, *Weak Links: Fragile States, Global Threats, and International Security*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

was in the scale of its ambition and the enormous means devoted to obtaining these unrealistic ends.

The orthodox prescription for intervention in weak and failed states entails a large-scale international security presence and a comprehensive mission to address the “root causes” of instability: dysfunctional governance, extreme poverty, radical economic disparities, poisonous intercommunal relations, and the collapse of the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force.⁶ To establish the security prerequisites for these wide-reaching ambitions, U.S. military doctrine suggests the presence of at least 20 troops for each 1,000 inhabitants of the host nation. Where the host nation’s security forces have collapsed and cannot provide a significant proportion of those 20 troops, the implied commitment of international forces is potentially enormous. A hypothetical intervention in Iran, for instance, would require the long-term deployment of approximately 1.5 *million* troops by this standard.

Critics claim that such large-scale interventions cannot be justified due to their poor record of success and their exorbitant costs. Iraq and Afghanistan are but the two most recent failures of ambitious nation-building agendas, they argue. The record of failure in fact extends back for decades, say critics, encompassing the disappointing returns on peace operations since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. experience in Vietnam, and the colonial experiences of the European powers. This argument is regaining considerable currency in defense circles, and it is echoed in a backlash among many academics and development experts against ambitious, Western-engineered policies of political and social transformation in developing countries.⁷

⁶ For an overview of the United States government’s understanding of the goals and tasks required for such missions, see United States Department of State, S/CRS “Essential Tasks Matrix,” undated. For an overview of U.S. military doctrine for such missions, see United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-07: Stability Operations*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006b.

⁷ Christopher Clapham, “The Global-Local Politics of State Decay,” in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. 77–93; Pierre Englebert and Denis M. Tull, “Postconflict Reconstruction in Africa: Flawed Ideas About Failed States,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Spring 2008, pp. 106–139; Amitai Etzioni, “Bottom-Up Nation Building,” *Policy Review*, Vol. 158, 2009; Amitai Etzioni, “A Self-Restrained Approach to Nation-Building by Foreign Powers,” *Inter-*

Even if proponents of large-scale stability operations can point to specific cases of relative success, critics still claim that such massive missions are too costly to be justifiable in an era of severe fiscal constraints and popular “intervention fatigue.” The dollar costs of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have been enormous: As of May 2010, the two operations combined accounted for \$159 billion of the annual Department of Defense budget.⁸ Some estimates have placed the total cost of OIF as high as \$3 trillion or more.⁹ The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that interest alone from the two wars could cost the United States \$700 billion between 2001 and 2017.¹⁰ The stress on U.S. service members has been similarly heavy: Nearly 90 percent of the 3,400 U.S. military officers surveyed in a 2008 poll said the Iraq war had “stretched the U.S. military dangerously thin.”¹¹ The greatest cost, of course, has been the cost in human lives: Over 6,000 Americans have been killed in the wars as of 2011, while the United States’ coalition partners have lost over 1,000 more.¹² At a minimum over 100,000 Iraqis and Afghans have also perished, although estimates vary widely.¹³

It is therefore unsurprising that Americans have turned against such wars. According to a recent survey, four out of five Americans

national Affairs, Vol. 80, No. 1, 2004, pp. 1–17; Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Autonomous Recovery and International Intervention in Comparative Perspective*, New York: Center for Global Development, April 2005.

⁸ Nancy A. Youssef, “Pentagon Rethinking Value of Major Counterinsurgencies,” *McClatchy Newspapers*, 2010.

⁹ Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, “The True Cost of the Iraq War: \$3 Trillion and Beyond,” *Washington Post*, September 5, 2010.

¹⁰ “U.S. CBO [Congressional Budget Office] Estimates \$2.4 Trillion Long-Term War Costs,” *Reuters*, October 24, 2007.

¹¹ “The U.S. Military Index,” *Foreign Policy*, March–April 2008, pp. 71–77.

¹² Numbers are drawn from icasualties.org.

¹³ For example Jonathan Steele and Suzanne Goldenberg, “What Is the Real Death Toll in Iraq?” *Guardian*, March 19, 2008.

think the United States spends too much defending other countries.¹⁴ Over half now think the United States should not be involved in Afghanistan.¹⁵

The Growing Consensus in Favor of Minimalist Stabilization

If Americans have tired of nation-building commitments, how should the United States respond if it believes that at least some weak and failed states may pose severe threats to American security in the future? For an influential portion of the U.S. defense community, the answer is that the United States should not abandon military interventions but rather scale down U.S. goals, with a concomitant reduction in resource requirements. Steven Metz of the U.S. Army War College succinctly summarizes the rationale for such small-scale missions—what we in this volume call “minimalist stabilization”:

American strategy was to “drain the swamp” by helping build effective, responsive governments and prosperous economies The great flaw with this idea is its massive inefficiency—the costs of any gains to American security far outweigh the benefits The world is full of “swamps.” By all measures, they are growing, not shrinking. The economic and human costs of stabilizing them and making them prosperous are astronomical. In the last few decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st century, the United States could afford an expensive and inefficient “drain the swamps” strategy. But as we grapple with an aging population, exploding health care costs, decaying infrastructure, and mounting educational challenges, the American people will no longer tolerate such inefficiency. This suggests that future military operations will not emulate Iraq and Afghanistan¹⁶

¹⁴ “48% Think Major Cuts in Defense Spending Won’t Put America at Risk,” *Rasmussen Reports*, July 18, 2011.

¹⁵ Quinnipiac University Poll, July 2011, accessed via iPoll on July 27, 2011.

¹⁶ Steven Metz, “The Army’s Strategic Role,” Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, 2009.

The well-known counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen raises the use of such operations to the status of a “doctrine”—a part of what he calls his “Anti-Powell Doctrine.” Although Kilcullen states that military interventions should be avoided altogether when possible, when they are required, “[p]lanners should select the lightest, most indirect and least intrusive form of intervention that will achieve the necessary effect. Policymakers should work by, with, and through partnerships with local government administrators, civil society leaders, and local security forces wherever possible.”¹⁷ In a similar vein, Robert Kaplan, foreign correspondent for *The Atlantic* and senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, writes that “[t]he smaller the unit, and the farther forward it is deployed among the indigenous population, the more it can accomplish. This is a lesson that turns imperial overstretch on its head.”¹⁸ Max Boot and Richard Bennett of the Council on Foreign Relations praise one example of this approach, OEF-P, writing that “this ‘soft and light’ approach—a ‘soft’ counterinsurgency strategy, a light American footprint—is a model that has obvious application to many countries around the world where we cannot or will not send large numbers of troops.”¹⁹

Such discussions have deeply penetrated official thinking in Washington. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) declares, “Efforts that use smaller numbers of U.S. forces and emphasize host-nation leadership are generally preferable to large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns. By emphasizing host-nation leadership and employing modest numbers of U.S. forces, the United States can sometimes obviate the need for larger-scale counterinsurgency campaigns.”²⁰ The measured tone in the 2010 QDR, however, likely belied the extent of the shift in U.S. thinking. Media reports suggested a broader reorienta-

¹⁷ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 283.

¹⁸ Robert D. Kaplan, “Imperial Grunts,” *Atlantic*, October 2005.

¹⁹ Max Boot and Richard Bennett, “Treading Softly in the Philippines,” *Weekly Standard*, Vol. 14, No. 16, January 5–12, 2009, pp. 22–28.

²⁰ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 2010.

tion toward such minimalist stabilization missions, with the *McClatchy Newspapers* reporting that

U.S. military strategists are quietly shifting gears, saying that large-scale counterinsurgency efforts cost too much and last too long Many Pentagon strategists think that future counterinsurgencies should involve fewer American ground troops and more military trainers, special forces and airstrikes The military calls it “foreign internal defense,” although some have a pithier name: counterinsurgency light.²¹

This perspective became codified as the official U.S. thinking in the recently released Defense Strategic Guidance, which stated that “U.S. forces will . . . be ready to conduct limited counterinsurgency and other stability operations if required, [but] U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations.”²²

Moving Beyond the Current Debate

Proponents of minimalist stabilization appear to be dominating present defense debates, but critics suggest that there is little that is new in this latest turn of the debate. Following the Vietnam War, the United States also turned to small-scale interventions designed to support partner nations under the so-called “Nixon Doctrine.”²³ Most of the proxy wars of the late Cold War period, however, became mired in bloody stalemate. Similarly, in the 1990s the United Nations (UN) Security Council often sought to stabilize states in conflict or recovering from conflict through peace operations, yet the member states frequently failed to authorize substantial troop and resource commitments. The consequences of these under-resourced operations were evi-

²¹ Youssef, 2010.

²² United States Department of Defense, 2012, p. 6.

²³ Richard Nixon, “Vietnamization,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969*, pp. 901–909. See also Peter Beinart, “Return of the Nixon Doctrine,” *Time Magazine*, January 4, 2007.

dent in disasters such as Rwanda and Angola, leading the so-called Brahimi Commission to demand appropriately large resource commitments from the Security Council whenever a peace operation was authorized for any but the most benign environments.²⁴ Finally, critics of small-scale stabilization missions point out that Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (OEF-A) itself began as a very small mission, only transitioning to a large stability operation after the “light footprint” approach had utterly failed.

The debate as it stands now is poorly structured. Proponents of minimalist stabilization typically spend more time arguing *against* interventions like Iraq and more recently Afghanistan than they spend clearly articulating what they are *for*. A full accounting of the arguments in favor of and against minimalist stabilization has not been provided. And proponents typically cite the same handful of recent cases—in particular U.S. support for the governments of the Philippines and Colombia—without a broader reckoning of the empirical record. The remainder of this chapter lays the groundwork for addressing these issues. The next section provides a precise definition of the concept of “minimalist stabilization,” while the following section details the research design this study uses to assess the evidence on either side of the debate.

The Concept of Minimalist Stabilization

The first step in evaluating a policy is to define it clearly. This study groups a variety of related proposals under the concept of “minimalist stabilization.” We define “minimalist stabilization” as small-scale, low-cost operations combining military and civilian activities to influence the political authority structure of a state in or recovering from violent conflict. They can either be launched on behalf of the government of the target state (as in counterinsurgency operations) or be neutral between the government and armed opposition groups (as in peace

²⁴ UN Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305 and S/2000/809, August 21, 2000.

operations), although we are excluding cases of intervention on behalf of rebels (as in unconventional warfare) as *destabilizing* missions. Minimalist stabilization operations can involve direct action or working through local partners or both. They can be launched during periods of active conflict or in the immediate aftermath in order to stabilize a peace, although this study focuses on interventions in ongoing wars.

The concept of minimalist stabilization can be understood in terms of the ends-ways-means rubric used by U.S. military planners. For an operation to be considered an instance of minimalist stabilization, the desired end state must focus on stabilizing a partner state; purely military operations such as targeted killings of terrorist leaders are excluded. Second, the ways must combine some degree of civil instruments with military ones; arms sales alone would not be included in the category. Finally and most obviously, the means must be small. How small is small enough to be considered “minimalist”? Any “break point” along the spectrum from no intervention to massive occupation will necessarily be somewhat arbitrary. As a rule of thumb, we describe as “minimalist” those operations deploying less than one-tenth of the doctrinally accepted force-to-population ratio of 20 security personnel per 1,000 inhabitants—that is, fewer than 2 security personnel for every 1,000 residents. Although somewhat arbitrary, in practice this rule fairly neatly separates interventions into intuitively appropriate categories, with only a couple of cases near the boundary.

It is important to note that minimalist stabilization missions are not equivalent to such terms as small-scale contingencies (SSCs), stability operations (SOs), security force assistance (SFA), building partner capacity (BPC), or foreign internal defense (FID), although all of these terms are related. According to U.S. military doctrine, stability operations may be small or large, and they typically entail a full range of activities to stabilize a partner country, including tasks such as establishing civil security, establishing civil control, restoring essential services, supporting governance, and supporting economic and infrastructure development. Minimalist stabilization missions may be—and in fact typically are—much more circumscribed in their ambitions. Small-scale contingencies, on the other hand, include a much narrower range of missions, but they may be purely “kinetic,” such

as narrowly defined counterterrorism operations or punitive raids, or they may be purely humanitarian, without any intent to influence the political authority structures of the target state. SFA and BPC generally refer to developing partner states' security organs. While such activities are almost always a part of minimalist stabilization, the latter concept also encompasses broader development activities, and it often includes direct action (of either the peace operations or counterinsurgency variety). Finally, FID refers exclusively to counterinsurgency-type activities, while minimalist stabilization also includes peace support missions. Table 1.1 helps to place minimalist stabilization missions in their broader context.

There remains a considerable range of operations that fall within the concept of minimalist stabilization. In practice these operations tend to emphasize two features. First, they usually accept and work within existing local power structures rather than pursuing any broader transformative agendas. Second, they typically emphasize rapid development of the host nation's own security forces so that responsibility for the partner's security can be transitioned as quickly as possible.

The most commonly cited examples of minimalist stabilization missions include OEF-P and U.S. support for Plan Colombia, although many lesser known interventions would also fit within this category, such as Russian intervention in Tajikistan or the Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Reaching further back, other examples include U.S. support for the government of El Salvador in the late Cold War, British support for the government of Oman, and a long history

Table 1.1
A Typology of Military Operations

Commitment	Instruments	
	Military	Military and Civil
High	Traditional warfare	Orthodox nation-building
Low	Limited intervention	Minimalist stabilization

of French interventions on behalf of governments in post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa.

Approach

This study adopts a two-step approach to the empirical analysis of minimalist stabilization. In a first step, we provide a simple quantitative assessment of all civil wars or insurgencies in the past 40 years. In this study, we restrict our focus to a particularly relevant subset of minimalist stabilization operations: interventions on behalf of an embattled government during the period of active conflict. Our quantitative analysis compares outcomes between cases of large-scale nation-building missions, minimalist stabilization operations, and cases without any foreign intervention on behalf of the government. There are a total of 22 minimalist stabilization missions in such circumstances and five large-scale interventions.²⁵ Given these small numbers, decisions about how to classify a single case can considerably influence a statistical analysis. Rather than adopting more sophisticated statistical methods, therefore, we emphasize transparency by adopting very simple quantitative comparisons and providing detailed explanations of our classifications in the appendix and in coding notes that are available upon request from the authors.

In a second step we investigate four cases of minimalist stabilization in Chapter Four. These cases were chosen to represent a variety of background conditions (relatively high and very low levels of economic development, powerful and weak insurgencies) and intervening forces. All four cases can be (and indeed have been) considered “success stories.” By focusing on specific cases, we can determine why minimalist stabilization produces the outcomes it does.²⁶ More importantly, we

²⁵ The actual number of cases is 26, but we exclude all cases of ongoing wars (four in total) since it is impossible to code the outcomes of such conflicts for quantitative analysis.

²⁶ Or, in social science terminology, what are the *causal mechanisms* linking causes and effects? See Peter Hédstrom and Richard Swedberg, *Social Mechanisms: An Analytic Approach to Social Theory*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

can better understand what “success” means in these contexts. The four case studies represent approximately one-sixth of all cases of minimalist stabilization on behalf of governments in periods of active conflict in the past four decades.²⁷ For these reasons we believe the conclusions we draw from our qualitative analysis can be applied across a wide variety of minimalist stabilization scenarios.

This analysis provides an important empirical foundation for debates about the uses and limits of minimalist stabilization. In many ways, though, it is only an early step in what should be a much broader, sustained discussion in U.S. policy circles. The benefits of minimalist stabilization should not be oversold, and we believe this analysis provides an important corrective against some of the more sweeping claims made by proponents of the concept. On the other hand, there clearly are circumstances in which stabilization may be required to secure important U.S. interests but the costs and risks of large-scale operations cannot be justified. Employed correctly, minimalist stabilization may be an important tool for such contingencies. Further analysis is required, however, to better understand the circumstances and strategies that may maximize these operations’ chances of success.

²⁷ Brief summaries of the remaining cases of minimalist stabilization are available upon request from the authors as part of the coding notes for this project.

Arguments For and Against Minimalist Stabilization

This chapter lays the groundwork for a broader assessment of minimalist stabilization. It reviews the arguments for and against this approach—arguments that tap a rich vein of academic and policy literature extending back to the Vietnam War.

Proponents of minimalist stabilization make three broad claims. First, minimalist operations have vastly lower costs and so can be more easily sustained by outside powers like the United States. Second, smaller missions are less likely to spark nationalist backlashes against external forces and their local allies. Third, minimalist approaches are less likely to breed a culture of dependence in the host nation's political class, and they are more likely to adapt to local conditions.

Opponents dispute each of these claims. They also warn that minimalist operations are able to exercise less control over local allies and thus risk having international assistance abused. Finally, skeptics note that many interventions that began small inexorably escalated, trapping the outside power and exacting costs far out of line with initial expectations.

Costs and Sustainability

There is widespread support for the claim that the benefits of large-scale stabilization missions are incommensurate to the costs, even when costs are understood narrowly in terms of financial expenditure.

Typical of this perspective is a recent report by the Afghanistan Study Group, which argued that

the U.S. will be spending almost \$100 billion per year in Afghanistan, with a stated primary purpose of eradicating just 20 to 30 Al Qaeda leaders, and in a country whose total GDP [gross domestic product] is only \$14 billion per annum. This is a serious imbalance of expenses to benefit. \$100 billion per year is more than the entire annual cost of the Obama administration's new health care plan and is money that could be used to better counter global terrorist threats, reduce the \$1.4 trillion annual deficit, repair and modernize a large portion of U.S. infrastructure, radically enhance American educational investment, launch a massive new Manhattan Project-like effort on energy alternatives research, or be used for other critical purposes.¹

This argument is by no means unique to Afghanistan; many have argued that such disproportionate costs are inherent to the way that the United States practices stabilization missions and their likelihood of success.²

These costs of course become all the more difficult to justify when the human toll is included. Battlefield fatalities have long been considered one of the primary determinants of American support for military interventions.³ Since the United States' "center of gravity" for military interventions is its public opinion, it is critical to preserve public support.⁴ Minimalist stabilization missions require far fewer American personnel, and at least in counterinsurgency environments, they entail

¹ Afghanistan Study Group, *A New Way Forward: Rethinking U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan*, 2010, p. 9.

² See for example Metz, 2009; Adam Shilling, "Nation-Building, Stability Operations, and Prophylactic Coin," *PKSOI Perspective*, May 5, 2010.

³ John Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*, New York: Wiley, 1973.

⁴ Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, New York: Dell Publishing, 1984, p. 181; Shilling, 2010.

far fewer casualties.⁵ This smaller commitment of American servicemen and women, combined with the much smaller dollar costs, makes minimalist stabilization missions much easier to sustain over long periods of time.⁶

Such arguments generally favor proponents of minimalist stabilization—although perhaps not as much as the concept’s supporters claim. When a path to victory is not clear or Americans are dubious of the ends being pursued, they become highly averse to even relatively small numbers of casualties.⁷ If minimalist stabilization missions have lower odds of success, or if they appear to be open-ended commitments in a prolonged war, then Americans may have trouble supporting even much smaller interventions. Moreover, even “minimalist” missions may have not-insignificant dollar costs: American support for Plan Colombia has run into the billions of dollars, despite the fact that only a few hundred American personnel are present in the country. Clearly minimalist missions are more sustainable than interventions on the scale of OIF or OEF-A in recent years, but there are limits even to these operations.

Nationalist Backlashes and Golden Hours

A second argument frequently made in favor of small-scale interventions is the risk of a nationalist backlash against large numbers of foreign troops. David Kilcullen’s book *The Accidental Guerrilla* attracted considerable attention to this argument, although it has been prevalent in thinking on counterinsurgency since the wars of decolonization in

⁵ In peace operations, however, smaller missions are frequently more likely to lead to casualties. See James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell, Brett Steele, Richard Teltschik, and Anga R. Timilsina, *The UN’s Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-304-RC, 2005.

⁶ Boot and Bennett, 2009.

⁷ Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-726-RC, 1996; Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler, “Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2005, pp. 7–46.

the 1950s and 1960s.⁸ Kilcullen claims that foreign troops generate a sort of “autoimmune” response from traditional societies. Outside powers are much more likely to secure their goals, he claims, if they can avoid engendering this autoimmune response by either avoiding military options altogether or, where military instruments are necessary, using the smallest and most indirect approach possible to obtain the desired goals. Such an argument has considerable resonance with decisionmakers; certainly fear of the “graveyard of empires” played an important role in the United States’ initial adoption of a “light footprint” approach in Afghanistan.

Although foreign powers have an unimpressive record of victory in counterinsurgency campaigns throughout the world, the reasons for this record are much less clear. It could be that foreign powers provoke the autoimmune response hypothesized by Kilcullen. On the other hand, it may be that foreign powers simply have less at stake in a far-away war than those who must live daily with the outcome—that is, the “balance of will” favors local parties even if the balance of power favors the larger, more developed intervening countries.⁹ If this latter explanation is correct, then the key to stabilizing a foreign country is not to maintain a small footprint but to maintain domestic political support. And as the discussion above indicated, such popular support may be forthcoming even for large operations if the conflict directly affects core U.S. security interests and the public is persuaded that the odds of victory are sufficiently high.

Indeed, it may be that the appropriate policy is precisely the opposite of the one suggested by the “minimalist” camp: The proper prescription may be to “go large,” especially early in an intervention, when popular expectations in the host nation are being shaped. According to this latter perspective, the initial period of an intervention constitutes a “golden hour,” in which public support for an intervention may be

⁸ Kilcullen, 2009; Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*, Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1990; John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, “Revolutionary War,” in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

⁹ Andrew Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict,” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1975, pp. 175–200.

gained if the intervening parties provide the critical services—above all, security demanded by the population.¹⁰ Although there is no rigorous empirical support for the notion of a golden hour, there is considerable evidence that the provision of security to the population is a critical determinant of conflict outcomes.¹¹ If the local government is incapable of protecting the population from insurgents, or if the government is so predatory that its actions provoke even greater instability, then a large foreign presence may be necessary until the government is capable of providing a sufficient level of security to the population.

Dependency, Adaptability, and Transformation

Proponents of minimalist stabilization often provide a third argument in favor of this approach: Because such missions have a small international footprint, they must rely on local actors to a much greater extent, making them much more likely to be adapted to local realities and less likely to make the supported regime dependent on foreign assistance. From this perspective, “[o]perating with economy compels innovation and adaptation.”¹²

The claim that large nation-building missions impose a one-size-fits all template ill-adapted to local contexts—or at least that interveners seek to export their own institutions abroad—is a common one.¹³ Such a tendency is not unique to military interventions. Scholar-practitioners such as Lant Pritchett (formerly an economist at the World

¹⁰ See for example James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, and Beth Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-557-SRF, 2007.

¹¹ See, especially, Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

¹² Robert M. Cassidy, “The Long Small War: Indigenous Forces for Counterinsurgency,” *Parameters*, Summer 2006, p. 59.

¹³ See Roland Paris, “Peacekeeping and the Constraints of Global Culture,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 9, No. 3, September 2003, pp. 441–473; Kimberly Zisk Marten, *Enforcing the Peace: Learning from the Imperial Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Bank, now a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School), William Easterly (formerly an economist at the World Bank and now codirector of NYU's Development Research Institute), and many others have made similar claims about development assistance.¹⁴

Similarly many critics of large-scale missions argue that they promote dependency on aid—a claim again echoed in the debates on development assistance. States that are not dependent on their citizens for their revenues are known in the literature as “rentier states,” whether they extract that revenue from mineral resources such as oil or from foreign aid. Because these states do not depend on their citizens for revenues, the population lacks one of the most effective mechanisms for holding their leaders accountable for poor decisions and performance. Critics of large-scale international assistance have argued that the result is poor governance, which in turn yields extremely negative development outcomes.¹⁵

Such criticisms have not fallen on deaf ears; the need to adapt to local circumstances and counteract the potential for aid dependency are at the heart of many recently adopted principles for the development community.¹⁶ A large number of proposals exist to develop mechanisms for reducing aid dependency and the unaccountability and poor governance that it fosters.

¹⁴ Lant Pritchett, Michael Woolcock, and Matt Andrews, “Capability Gaps? The Mechanisms of Persistent Implementation Failure,” Working Paper 234, Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, 2010; William Easterly, “Institutions: Top Down or Bottom Up?” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 98, No. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the One Hundred Twentieth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, May 2008, pp. 95–99.

¹⁵ See Nicolas van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; and Todd Moss, Gunilla Pettersson, and Nicolas van de Walle, “An Aid-Institutions Paradox? A Review Essay on Aid Dependency and State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Working Paper No. 74, Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, 2006. For an application of the rentier state argument to Afghanistan, see Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 2nd ed., New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002.

¹⁶ The first of the so-called Paris Principles, for instance, is to “[t]ake context as the starting point” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*, April 2007). The World Bank’s document “Fragile States—Good Practice in Country Assistance Strategies,” 2005, also emphasizes the importance of adapting to local context and prioritizes public accountability.

The problems, however, are enduring ones not easily solved. Douglas Blaufarb discussed some of these problems decades ago in one of the classics of the counterinsurgency literature. American counterinsurgency strategy, he wrote, is premised on inducing the partner state to implement political reforms, but such political reforms are almost certain to undermine the sitting government. American partners in the target state therefore do everything they can to thwart the implementation of these reforms. Hypothetically the United States (or any other intervening state) could threaten to withdraw all support and allow the regime to crumble. Such threats, however, are not credible if the United States has invested considerable resources and prestige in the intervention, risking a loss of credibility if it fails. Lesser forms of conditionality fail because the United States does not have the visibility into the inner workings of the partner state's politics to carefully monitor compliance.¹⁷

Although Blaufarb wrote more than three decades ago to explain the United States' failure in Vietnam, the same dynamics he described have been visible since. The political scientist Thad Dunning, for instance, found that geopolitical imperatives neutralized American conditionality threats during the Cold War, thus undermining the effectiveness of democracy assistance.¹⁸ Similarly, other scholars found that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund typically reward strategically important countries with development assistance, thereby weakening any approach that would make assistance conditional on economic and political performance.¹⁹

¹⁷ Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance*, New York: Free Press, 1977.

¹⁸ Thad Dunning, "Conditioning the Effects of Aid: Cold War Politics, Donor Credibility, and Democracy in Africa," *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 2, Spring 2004, pp. 409–423.

¹⁹ Axel Dreher, Jan-Egbert Sturm, and James Raymond Vreeland, "Development Aid and International Politics: Does Membership on the UN Security Council Influence World Bank Decisions?" *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 88, No. 1, 2009a, pp. 1–18; Axel Dreher, Jan-Egbert Sturm, and James Raymond Vreeland, "Global Horse Trading: IMF Loans for Votes in the United Nations Security Council," *European Economic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 7, 2009b, pp. 742–757.

Perhaps the best solution to these problems is to minimize the distortions of international assistance by reducing its scale. Such an approach conforms to the arguments of minimalist stabilization's proponents. Yet this strategy suffers from its own critical flaw: It leaves in place precisely the political structures that caused the problems requiring foreign intervention in the first place. Simon Chesterman of New York University makes this argument emphatically:

As the operation in Afghanistan demonstrates, a light footprint makes the success of an operation more than usually dependent on the political dynamic of local actors. Since the malevolence or collapse of that political dynamic is precisely the reason that power is arrogated to an international presence, the light footprint is unsustainable as a model for general application.²⁰

For those who argue that the United States should narrowly circumscribe its role to "building capacity" in partner states' security forces, it is critical to note that it is these same political dynamics that shape partner states' abilities to undertake counterinsurgency. Dan Byman, for instance, writes that illegitimate and repressive regimes frequently create militaries designed to prevent coups rather than succeed in counterinsurgency. The result, he says, is a

military culture often . . . characterized by poor intelligence; a lack of initiative; little integration of forces across units; soldiers who do not want to fight; bad officers and noncommissioned officers . . . ; and difficulties with training, learning, and creativity.²¹

He warns that such militaries have often been partners with the United States in the "war on terror," frequently with perverse consequences.

The prosecution of a counterinsurgency campaign, of course, is not solely—or even primarily—a military matter. The broader dysfunc-

²⁰ Simon Chesterman, *You, the People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 242.

²¹ Daniel L. Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Fall 2006, p. 81.

tions in a partner state's governing capacity are also likely to undermine its ability to defeat insurgencies or stabilize peripheral regions. Thus, Jeffrey Herbst warns, for instance, that "[m]ost African countries have no carrots, only sticks. As a result, African militaries rely on relatively blunt strikes in the hope of defeating even small groups of rebels."²²

Large-scale efforts to transform a host nation's politics—or at least to nudge them toward a significantly better level—risk such outcomes as aid dependency and the creation of institutions ill-adapted to local context. The converse risk, however, is that small-scale operations will replicate the institutions and dynamics that fuel violent conflict and instability. While proponents of minimalist stabilization argue that such small-scale operations are necessarily more adapted to local realities, they typically ignore the opposite risks that such an approach entails.

Control and Escalation

A final argument may be made against minimalist stabilization: the risk that the costs of the intervention will escalate far beyond what had been anticipated, either because local parties use military support in a way that harms the interests of the intervener or because the intervening state is drawn deeper into a conflict than it had anticipated.

One need not look far back in time to find examples of partner states who used external military assistance in ways that ultimately proved disastrous. The United States provided Georgia with military assistance, only to have its partners in Tbilisi use their military to launch a new round of conflict with Georgia's breakaway regions—an act that provoked war with Russia, a crisis within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the destruction of much of the Georgian military that the United States had been helping to build. Far more catastrophically, France provided military assistance to the Hutu regime of President Habyarimana in Rwanda, and it was the

²² Jeffrey Herbst, "African Militaries and Rebellion: The Political Economy of Threat and Combat Effectiveness," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, May 2004, p. 362.

beneficiaries of this assistance that launched the worst case of genocide the world had seen in decades. Building partner capacity without large numbers of intervening troops present to direct how that capacity is used may empower local actors to pursue agendas at odds with the intervener's strategic interests and moral values.²³

Finally, the decision to launch an intervention is normally made on the basis of American interests at stake in a given state and the costs the United States is willing to accept to secure those interests. The very act of intervening, however, changes those stakes, even if the intervention is small. Once the United States is seen to have made a commitment to a country, walking away can damage—or be perceived to damage—the United States' reputation and credibility. Probably the preeminent example of such dynamics is the U.S. intervention in South Vietnam. Kosovo provides a more recent example: The United States and its NATO allies were drawn into a bombing campaign much more intense than anticipated because, once committed, the alliance's credibility and future relevance was perceived to be at stake. It may be possible to abandon some interventions if the options are either failure or an unacceptably costly escalation. But history is replete with examples of interventions that began small and quickly escalated out of all proportion to their initial value.²⁴

Conclusion

Just as the Vietnam War led to a broad-based skepticism concerning the value of counterinsurgency and large-scale American intervention in others' civil wars, so the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused the United States to retrench. In both cases the results may very well be the same—not a rejection of intervention altogether, but a rejection of massive, costly interventions in favor of small-scale support to partner

²³ Nathan P. Freier, "The New Theology: Building Partner Capacity," *Small Wars Journal*, 2010.

²⁴ Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson, and Larry Berman, *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

governments under threat. Both the policy literature on the subject and media reports suggest that such a shift is currently under way in the U.S. defense community.

While the greater realism about what large-scale military interventions can and cannot accomplish is a healthy development, the apparently low-cost alternative of minimalist stabilization deserves equal scrutiny. This chapter's review of arguments for and against minimalist stabilization suggests that such arguments by themselves are inconclusive. Nor is it adequate to rely solely on the same handful of recent cases of small-scale intervention. Before highly consequential foreign policy and force structure decisions are made, a much more complete and systematic review of the empirical record is necessary. It is to this task that the following chapters turn. Chapter Three provides a quantitative overview of the record of minimalist stabilization missions in counter-insurgency contexts. Chapter Four then applies the arguments of this chapter to four case studies, explaining why the broad patterns evident in Chapter Three hold true.

Overview of the Results of Minimalist Stabilization

In attempting to parse between arguments about the utility of minimalist stabilization, we must be able to define what success looks like, how likely the different approaches to intervention are to secure success, and what the costs of each approach are likely to be. Reality, as always, is much more complex than such a simple formula suggests, posing multiple challenges to research design. There are multiple dimensions to “success,” for instance, and it is not clear how to weight the trade-offs between these dimensions. Either a great many indicators of success would have to be adopted, or many unanticipated second- and third-order effects may be left out of the reckoning. Because interventions are typically launched in particularly challenging cases, it is difficult to define the appropriate baseline against which success rates for interventions should be compared. Finally, there are very few cases of large-scale military interventions in the past several decades, making it nearly impossible to make statistical generalizations about them.

Given these challenges, this study does not seek to offer a definitive assessment of the utility of minimalist stabilization. Instead it seeks to provide an overview of how minimalist stabilization performs on one key dimension of success: its ability to help supported governments win counterinsurgency campaigns. Such an approach significantly narrows the scope of the study. The study does not examine peace operations, for instance, nor does it systematically examine the costs of counterinsurgency campaigns, either for the intervening states or for the target state itself. What this study does do is provide a baseline estimate of the

effectiveness of minimalist stabilization (that is, the probability that it can positively influence military outcomes) and a more qualitative assessment of the strategic utility of the military gains achieved.

The following section of this chapter explains the analytic framework used to assess the utility of minimalist stabilization. The second half of this chapter then provides a simple quantitative overview of the military outcomes of all intrastate conflicts (civil wars or insurgencies) in the past four decades, comparing instances of minimalist intervention with nonintervention and with the handful of cases of large-scale interventions.

Analytic Framework

The study of military interventions has become increasingly quantitative over the past two decades. Several well-known cross-national datasets and hundreds of statistical analyses have contributed useful empirical rigor to the field. They have not, however, typically generated a wide body of cumulative findings at the cross-national level—that is, conclusions that are replicated across analyses when different measures, controls, and methods are used. The complexity of the phenomenon and the small number of cases are largely responsible. Dozens of factors influence the outcomes of interventions, but there are only a small number of cases that allow us to parse between these potential explanations. In our study, for instance, there are only 22 cases of “minimalist stabilization” on behalf of a government fighting an insurgency that have reached a conclusion. With so few cases, even small coding decisions play an enormous role in determining the results of an analysis.

In part for this reason, this study adopts a simpler approach. In a first step, we conduct a simple quantitative analysis to highlight broad trends in intervention outcomes. We then explore these trends in greater depth through case studies. The quantitative analysis helps us to determine what our case studies tell us about the broader range of historical cases—that is, how “generalizable” our qualitative results are. The case studies, in turn, allow us to determine why exactly minimalist stabilization produces the outcomes it does. Even more importantly,

the case studies enable us to better understand what *success* means in these contexts.

Because there are such a small number of cases of minimalist stabilization, our research design emphasizes transparency over methodological sophistication. We do not use any complicated econometric tools. Instead, we highlight simple trends, discuss their implications in light of existing analyses, and help readers to understand how individual cases fit within these trends through a number of tables and charts, the case studies in the remainder of the book.¹

Empirical Scope of the Research

Our dataset is based on the dataset of civil wars compiled by Michael Doyle of Columbia University and Nicholas Sambanis of Yale University.² Our analysis focuses on states that have experienced civil war or insurgency (we use the terms interchangeably) in the past four decades (i.e., wars beginning after 1970). Although different social science datasets have slightly different lists of cases of civil wars, with variation occurring due to some differences in how exactly the term is defined, the Doyle and Sambanis dataset is generally believed to include all cases of civil war within the years covered. Our time period is somewhat arbitrary but is intended to comprise the era since the end of the global wave of decolonization that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s.³

Military Outcomes: Defining Success

Success is a notoriously difficult concept to define. From a U.S. security policy perspective, the relevant dimensions of success are those that impinge on the security interests of the United States. A complete

¹ Brief historical notes on all cases of minimalist stabilization not detailed in Chapter Four are available upon request from the authors.

² Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis," in Daniel Druckman and Paul F. Diehl, *Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 5, London: Sage, 2006a, pp. 396–440.

³ There were, of course, a few instances of decolonization since the 1960s—e.g., the independence of the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique and the end of South African occupation of Namibia. Nearly all of these conflicts, however, began before 1971, making 1971 a useful year for distinguishing between the era of decolonization and its aftermath.

analysis of minimalist stabilization would therefore examine a large number of relevant outcomes: the military outcome of an insurgency, the duration of the peace that follows the end of a civil war, the number of people killed during the course of fighting, the number of refugees generated, the economic consequences of the fighting for the United States and its allies, and so on.

Such a complete analysis would be the subject of many studies. For this analysis, we are interested in the military outcomes of conflict. Military outcomes are divided into four categories:

1. victory for the government
2. defeat for the government
3. mixed outcomes—stalemate or negotiated settlement between the government and the armed opposition
4. ongoing conflict.

“Mixed” outcomes were characterized by one of two results: (i) significant concessions must have been made by all of the parties to the agreement (usually involving both strong political rights for all major parties and integration of the formerly warring forces on terms that did not heavily favor one or the other side), or (ii) the fighting dropped beneath the threshold of violence necessary to be considered a “war,” but both sides retained considerable military potential and the political or organizational structure to reactivate the conflict at a time of their choosing. Inevitably the distinction between decisive victory and a negotiated settlement that favors one side is not clear-cut; some degree of individual judgment is inevitable. Despite the inherent ambiguity, such categorizations are used by a large number of analyses. To minimize the potential for our coding decisions to be influenced by our priors for this particular analysis, we relied as much as possible on coding decisions made by an independent team of RAND researchers for an earlier analysis conducted by Ben Connable and Martin Libicki.⁴

⁴ Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-965-MCIA, 2010. Because the analysis in the present study was based on a different list of civil wars than that used by Connable and Libicki, however, we were forced to change some of the earlier coding decisions to align with the new starting and

Stabilizing Interventions

As discussed earlier stabilizing interventions are defined as operations combining civil and military elements undertaken to influence the political authority structures of a target state. For this particular study we are limiting our analysis to cases of intervention on behalf of a partner government in an ongoing conflict. Excluded are interventions intended to be neutral between the government and insurgents (e.g., United Nations peace operations) or operations that take place before or after a conflict. Thus preventive or so-called “Phase 0” operations (typically falling in the category of BPC operations) are beyond the scope of this analysis, as are post-conflict peace-building missions. To build the most inclusive possible list of military interventions that would fit such parameters, we combined and updated three different datasets, then added data on the number of intervening forces using a variety of open sources.⁵ Large interventions are those in which foreign forces enjoy force-to-population ratios at least one-tenth of the total level of 20 personnel per 1,000 inhabitants recommended in U.S. military doctrine and a number of independent studies.⁶ “Minimalist” interventions are those in which foreign troops are present in numbers below the two per 1,000 force-to-population ratio or where foreign powers contribute significant numbers of advisors, intelligence, and military equipment to an embattled government but not large numbers of combat troops.

ending points of some civil wars. In a handful of cases, we believed we had strong reasons for changing the categorization of a particular case. Where we have done so, the coding notes in Appendix A of this monograph explain our decisions.

⁵ The datasets on which we primarily relied were Patrick M. Regan, “Third Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2002, pp. 55–73; Doyle and Sambanis, 2006a; and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo (UCDP/PRIO) Armed Conflict Dataset. For more information on sources and precise coding procedures, please see the coding notes included in Appendix A.

⁶ United States Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006a; James T. Quinnlivan, “Force Requirements in Stability Operations,” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4, Winter 1995/96, pp. 59–69.

Operational Environments

Outcomes, of course, are not solely or even primarily determined by military interventions; the primary determinants are the characteristics of the target state itself. Rather than attempting to capture the full range of contextual factors (an impossible task), in this study we adopt a simple framework that focuses on two of the factors that have been most reliably identified with instability: the resources available to the armed opposition and the level of development of the country at war. In very broad terms these two factors can be understood to represent the “supply” of and “demand” for insurgency. More-developed countries tend to have stronger states capable of providing a broader array of services to their populations and capable of sustaining more powerful, better disciplined security forces. Higher-income states also offer more opportunities for remunerative nonviolent labor—that is, young men have many well-paying work options that do not involve taking up arms. Thus, higher levels of development (measured in terms of GDP per capita) should be associated with a lower “demand” for insurgency. On the “supply” side, where cash and weapons for potential armed groups are plentiful, we should expect to see many more insurgent groups. The two most important sources of support for armed opposition groups have historically been external state sponsors or high-value, easily transportable natural resources such as illicit narcotics, so-called “blood diamonds,” and the like.⁷

⁷ On the importance of economic development, see for instance Håvard Hegre Nicholas Sambanis, “Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 50, No. 4, August 2006, pp. 508–535. On the importance of state support for rebels, see for instance Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew J. Enterline, “Killing Time: The World Politics of Civil War Duration, 1820–1992,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4, December 2000, pp. 615–642; Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom, “On the Duration of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004, pp. 253–273; Connable and Libicki, 2010; and Regan, 2002. On the importance of high-value, easily transportable natural resources—what the political scientists James Fearon and David Laitin of Stanford call “contraband”—see for instance, James D. Fearon and David Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1, February 2003, pp. 75–90; and Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2004, pp. 563–595.

Where both of these risk factors for insurgency are present, regimes will find it difficult to win in fights against rebels, and wars that are ended either through military victory or through negotiation are likely soon to erupt again. Such contexts consequently constitute difficult operational environments. Cases in which neither of these risk factors is present represent benign environments. And countries in which one—but only one—of these risk factors is present, count as moderate operational environments. The typology created by the intersection of these two factors is represented in Table 3.1.

Such a typology does not allow us to control for all of the contextual factors that might influence the success or failure of an intervention, of course, but it provides an extremely useful approximation of the degree of difficulty faced by a particular mission. The case studies will then explore these operational environments in greater detail.

Empirical Results

Our analysis of minimalist stabilization outcomes proceeds in several steps. First, to develop a baseline against which minimalist stabilization missions can be compared, we examine military outcomes in the absence of intervention. Second, we investigate where military interventions are launched—whether intervening states tend to intervene in conflicts where they believe they have a good chance of winning or in support of governments that are almost certain to lose without external assistance. We then assess the overall record of minimalist stabilization

Table 3.1
A Typology of Operational Environments

Opposition Resources	Development	
	Low	High
Low	Moderate environment	Benign environment
High	Difficult environment	Moderate environment

missions before breaking the results down by operational environment to compare outcomes among comparable cases. We find that minimalist stabilization missions are usually launched in at least moderately difficult operational environments, although large-scale interventions are deployed almost exclusively in the most difficult cases. We find no evidence that minimalist stabilization missions significantly improve the supported government's chances of winning a civil war. What minimalist stabilization can do, however, is prevent a government from losing; a government's odds of defeat decline significantly when supported by a minimalist stabilization mission. In the final section of this chapter, we explore the conditions under which preventing defeat might be adequate to secure important U.S. security interests.

Outcomes in the Absence of Intervention

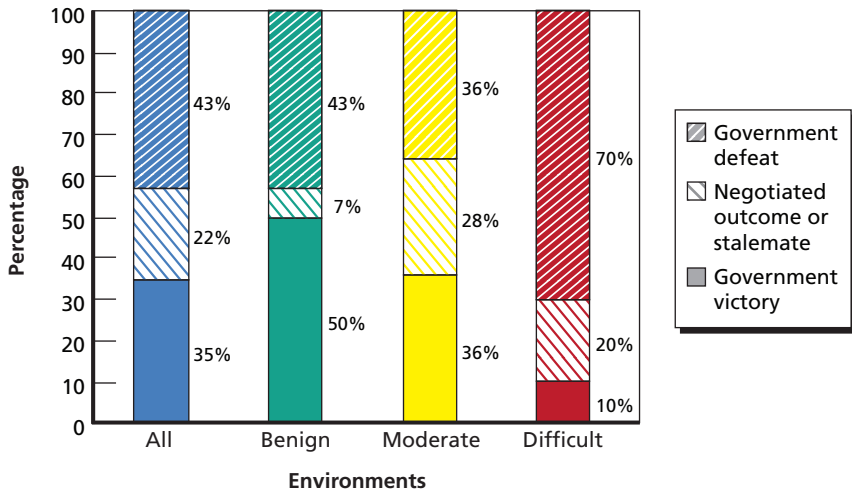
In the absence of intervention, the warring parties typically fight until one side or the other wins, and more often than not it is the rebels. The government has won in approximately 35 percent of historical cases, while insurgents have won roughly 43 percent of the time. Only 22 percent of wars end in a negotiated settlement or stalemate when no outside party intervenes on behalf of the government.

Operational environments influence these aggregate outcomes almost precisely as the preceding discussion suggests they should. Governments almost never win in difficult operational environments; a mere 10 percent of wars in such environments end in government victory. On the opposite end of the spectrum, governments are victorious in half of all conflicts fought in benign operational environments. Moderate operational environments yield outcomes between these two extremes: Governments win in 36 percent of cases. Similarly, governments have been defeated in 70 percent of the conflicts in difficult environments, but that proportion declines to 36 percent in moderate environments, although it unexpectedly rises to 43 percent in benign environments. These results are presented in Figure 3.1.

Where Do States Intervene?

Where do states choose to intervene? Fearing loss of reputation on both the international and domestic stages in the event of defeat, leaders may

Figure 3.1
Conflict Outcomes in the Absence of Stabilizing Interventions



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seek to avoid launching interventions where they are unlikely to succeed.⁸ On the other hand, because interventions are inherently difficult enterprises, leaders may agree with former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who recently declared that any American leader who chose to become involved in a large-scale counterinsurgency operation should “have his head examined.”⁹ In this conception interventions may be a “good way to get out of a situation gone bad,” as Andrew Exum of the Center for a New American Security put it, but they

⁸ On the “audience costs” paid by leaders who lose international conflicts, see James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3, 1994, pp. 577–592; Kenneth A. Schultz, “Looking for Audience Costs,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 1, February 2001, pp. 32–60; Michael Tomz, “Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach,” *International Organization*, Vol. 61, No. 4, 2007, pp. 821–840; and Jessica L. Weeks, “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve,” *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1, pp. 35–64.

⁹ Thom Shanker, “Warning Against Wars Like Iraq and Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2011.

would be chosen only as a last resort, when the alternative was clear and potentially catastrophic failure.¹⁰

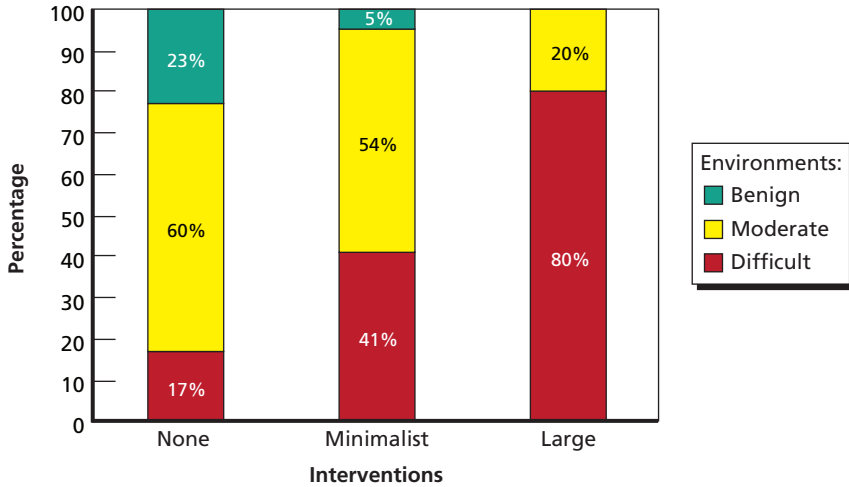
The answer to this question is highly consequential for how we interpret the outcomes of interventions. If leaders intervene only in situations in which they are likely to succeed, then interventions may be correlated with positive outcomes not because of any effects of the intervention itself but rather because the environment itself was favorable. On the other hand, if leaders intervene only as a last resort in order to avoid catastrophe, then interventions may be correlated with a poor record of success, but in the absence of intervention these countries may have experienced even worse outcomes.¹¹

Figure 3.2 reveals that the latter interpretation is closer to the truth: States typically intervene in more hostile environments, and large interventions are launched almost exclusively in the most difficult environments. Only a single intervention of any size has occurred in support of a government in a benign environment (less than 5 percent of all interventions), compared to 23 percent of wars without external intervention. At the opposite extreme, all but one of the large interventions of the past 40 years (80 percent of interventions in wars that have terminated) have occurred in difficult environments, and 41 percent of minimalist interventions have occurred in these challenging contexts. In contrast, only 17 percent of civil wars without interventions on behalf of the beleaguered government took place in difficult environments. Interventions, in other words, are launched where they are most needed—in the cases where the government is most likely to fail without outside support. Minimalist interventions are somewhat more likely to be targeted on difficult environments,

¹⁰ Exum was quoted in Youssef, 2010.

¹¹ The nonrandom assignment of “treatments”—in this case, interventions—may bias outcomes either positively or negatively. Such “selection effects” may be incorporated into more sophisticated statistical analyses through propensity matching or similar procedures. Again, due to the small number of cases, problems of measurement, and the emphasis on transparent results, this study does not implement one of these procedures. The approach adopted, however, provides a simple way of observing such selection effects and incorporating them into the analysis.

Figure 3.2
Environments in Which Intervening Forces are Deployed (Excluding Ongoing Conflicts)



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while large-scale interventions are overwhelmingly likely to occur in the most difficult circumstances.

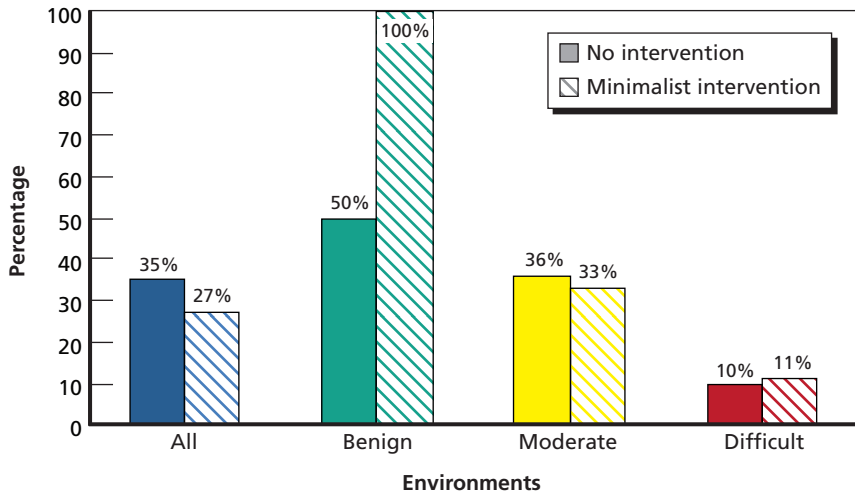
Consequences of Minimalist Stabilization

Minimalist stabilization missions do appear to influence the military outcomes of internal conflicts, but not in the ways that most proponents seem to suggest.

Perhaps surprisingly, minimalist stabilization missions do *not* significantly improve supported governments' odds of victory. In fact, governments supported by a minimalist stabilization operation are somewhat *less* likely to win (27 percent of cases) than governments that receive no outside assistance (35 percent of cases), as can be seen in Figure 3.3.

As discussed above, such results could be misleading if outside powers are only intervening on behalf of governments who would otherwise have been defeated. But even if we adopt the most favorable possible assumptions for minimalist stabilization, such missions still

Figure 3.3
Military Victories in Minimalist Interventions and Noninterventions



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do not yield a significant increase in the likelihood of victory. Perhaps no governments supported by minimalist stabilization missions would have emerged victorious had they not received outside support; in this case, the appropriate baseline success rate against which minimalist missions should be compared would be 0 percent. We could also assume that minimalist stabilization missions never make a state *less* likely to win—that is, they never spark a nationalist backlash against their presence, or incite other external powers to intervene on behalf of rebels, and so on. Both of these are strong assumptions, but they are useful for heuristic purposes. Six cases out of 22 interventions is a 27 percent success rate, and this rate represents the absolute upper bound for how successful minimalist stabilization missions may have been in securing victory.

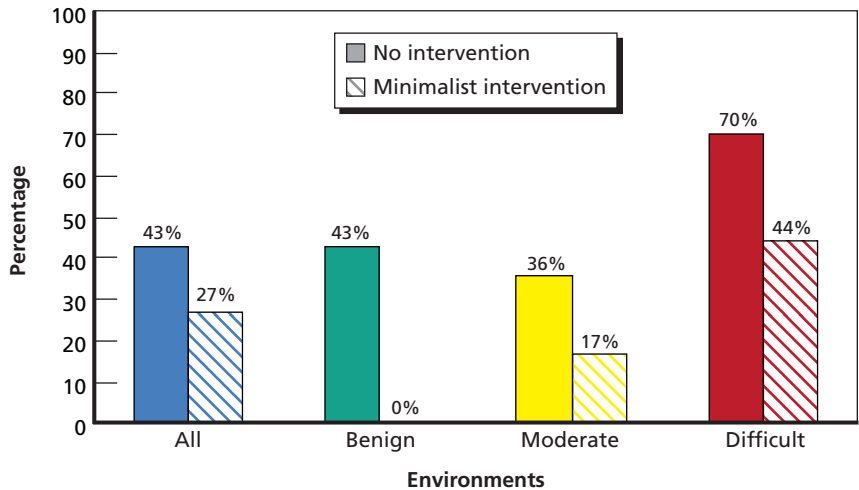
On closer empirical examination, however, these assumptions are revealed to be too strong. Supported governments would not have lost

every single time in the absence of intervention; in fact, in only three of these six cases can we plausibly make an argument that minimalist stabilization missions were what tipped the balance toward victory.¹² In the Republic of Congo (1997–1998), Oman (1971–1975), and in Zaire (1977–1978), outside intervention appears to have played a strong role in securing victory for weak governments. In the other three cases of victory, however—in Angola (1997–2002), Iraq (1974–1975), and Peru (1980–1996)—it is difficult to make the argument that minimalist stabilization played a major role. In Angola the 1,200 intervening forces from Namibia played a minor role, mostly confined to the border region near Namibia. In Iraq the conflict in the 1970s shifted decisively not as a result of Soviet military aid but rather because Baghdad and Tehran brokered a deal in which Tehran agreed to withdraw its support from the Kurdish rebels. And in Peru the United States provided only small-scale intelligence and military aid—a case that only marginally qualifies as an instance of “intervention” at all. Thus it appears that minimalist stabilization missions played a significant role in helping to secure victory in only three cases, and all three of these cases involved tiny insurgent movements in extremely weak countries—conditions under which minimalist stabilization would be most likely to influence outcomes. If minimalist stabilization missions ever played a harmful role in other conflicts—perhaps by undermining the government’s legitimacy, or galvanizing a nationalist backlash against the government, or provoking outside intervention on behalf of insurgents—then these three victories look even less compelling as evidence in favor of minimalist stabilization.

All of this is not to say, however, that minimalist stabilization does not play an important role in determining military outcomes. Minimalist stabilization does not appear to offer a significant improvement in a supported state’s chances of victory, but it *does* significantly decrease the odds of a partner state’s defeat. As Figure 3.4 reveals, embattled governments supported by minimalist stabilization missions are significantly less likely to be defeated by rebels than governments

¹² For descriptions of all of these conflicts, including case-specific coding decisions, please contact the authors.

Figure 3.4
Military Defeat in Minimalist Interventions and Noninterventions



RAND MG1226-3.4

that do not enjoy outside support. This relationship becomes all the stronger when we consider that outside states typically intervene when they perceive that the threatened government is unlikely to stave off defeat on its own.

When we turn to specific cases, a strong argument can be made that minimalist stabilization played a critical role in preventing defeat in most of these cases. France, for instance, appears to have played a critical role in preventing a Libyan-backed rebel victory in Chad in the 1980s and in fending off repeated coup attempts in the CAR. Russian forces in Tajikistan intervened at several critical junctures to ensure the United Tajik Opposition would not defeat Russia's local allies. As will be seen in greater detail in Chapter Four, American support for El Salvador proved critical to turning back the large-scale Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) offensives in 1984.

In summary, minimalist stabilization does not appear able to significantly increase a partner government's odds of victory, but it can help these governments to avoid defeat. The apparent contradiction

Figure 3.5**Outcomes in Minimalist Interventions and Noninterventions**

RAND MG1226-3.5

can be explained by the dramatic increase in the number of mixed outcomes (negotiated settlements and stalemates), as reflected in Figure 3.5.

Understanding the Role of Operational Environments

The potential and limitations of minimalist stabilization missions can be better understood by viewing them in context—that is, by examining cases of intervention and nonintervention in each of the four operational environments.

Benign Environments

Only one intervention has been launched in such an environment: Soviet support for Baghdad in the 1970s in its fight against the Iraqi Kurds. Although this case resulted in victory for the government of Iraq, the interesting question in this environment is not why minimalist stabilization missions succeed but why governments ever fail when they possess vastly greater resources than the opposition. When governments in such circumstances fail, it is typically not for lack of resources but rather because central authority has collapsed in a revolution. Examples include the secessionist struggles that engulfed Yugoslavia in the early 1990s or the weakness of the Russian central government following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In such circumstances the critical issue is not the building of capacity, so military support for the government is unlikely to help and may be actively harmful (as

was the case in the Iranian Revolution in 1979). Minimalist stabilization missions are thus likely to be of limited utility when launched on behalf of the government, although neutral interventions might be constructive under certain circumstances.

Moderate Environments (High Development, High Opposition Resources)

In relatively more developed countries where the armed opposition has access to significant resources, the most common reason for government defeat is external state sponsorship for the rebels. In such circumstances minimalist stabilization missions by themselves are unlikely to resolve the conflict, and military support for the government may actually make the situation worse by emboldening the partner regime to be more aggressive than its position warrants (e.g., Georgia in 2008). Where the level of resources flowing to the insurgents is relatively low, minimalist stabilization missions may be enough to tip the balance in favor of the government, as in the case of British and Iranian support to the government of Oman in the early 1970s. Where the insurgents' resources are substantial, however, a durable resolution will usually require a diplomatic solution—either an accord with the rebels' state sponsors or a multilateral effort to reduce or eliminate the proceeds to “contraband” (e.g., buyers' cartels to prevent the trafficking of “conflict diamonds”). When such diplomatic solutions are not possible, as was often the case during the Cold War for instance, then minimalist stabilization missions may prevent the defeat of the client state, but they are unlikely to secure victory and often lead to lengthy and bloody stalemates.

Moderate Environments (Low Development, Low Opposition Resources)

Such environments produce the largest number of mixed or indeterminate outcomes. When both sides are weak, it is common for the warring parties to battle to a stalemate. Minimalist stabilization missions make it highly unlikely that a supported government will be defeated by rebels; only once has such a government lost (Uganda in the 1980s). On the other hand, outright victories for supported governments are

also relatively rare, accounting for only two of the eight cases of minimalist interventions in such environments.

Difficult Environments

Minimalist stabilization missions exercise an apparently strong effect on military outcomes in difficult environments, reducing the odds of defeat from 70 percent (in cases of nonintervention) to 44 percent. When we examine the empirical record more closely, however, this record looks less impressive. In two of the five cases in which minimalist stabilization missions apparently helped a government to avoid defeat, the country returned to war within two years. In the other three cases peace proved durable, but largely because the “operational environment” changed. In Mozambique and Nicaragua, minimalist stabilization missions helped to prevent defeat, and these countries eventually proved stable in the period after their wars ended. But in both of these cases the war was brought to an end and the post-conflict transition was stabilized by the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of external support for the rebels, not because of the minimalist stabilization missions themselves. Without the seismic shift in superpower relations, these conflicts gave every indication of continuing indefinitely. In the case of the Angolan civil war ending in 2002, post-conflict stability was strengthened considerably by the influx of oil revenues to the state—revenues that moved Angola out of the ranks of low-income states and into the ranks of middle-income nations. In difficult environments as elsewhere, minimalist stabilization missions appear able to stave off defeat, but they do not appear able to secure victory. Moreover, without broader structural shifts in the conflict environment, the assisted countries typically remain mired in conflict for years if not decades.

Large Interventions

In the past four decades there have been only five cases of large-scale interventions in wars that have come to an end by the time of the data cut-off point for this study: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan,

the Cuban-led intervention in Angola, the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia, the Syrian intervention in Lebanon, and the joint UN and British operations in Sierra Leone. Neither of the two large interventions that are best-known—the U.S.-led OIF and OEF-A after 2008—has yet to lead to conclusive outcomes.¹³

It is nearly impossible to make any statistical generalization on the basis of such a small number of cases. As discussed above, we can say conclusively that such operations are deployed almost exclusively in the most difficult environments. The only one of these cases that does not qualify as a “difficult” environment is the Syrian intervention in Lebanon, and clearly Lebanon was also highly challenging. The outcomes of such operations, however, are more ambiguous and not as amenable to quantitative generalizations.

If we simply use the same criteria to assess large interventions as we used for minimalist ones, large interventions appear to outperform smaller-scale ones. Of the five large interventions that have terminated, four were launched in difficult environments. One of these ended in government victory (Sierra Leone), one in defeat (the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan), and two in negotiated settlements (the Cubans in Angola and the Vietnamese in Cambodia). Such a record is better than the record in cases of nonintervention or minimalist intervention. Governments are victorious in only approximately 10 percent of cases without large-scale interventions but in 25 percent of the cases in which large operations are present. Similarly, in difficult environments governments are defeated 70 percent of the time when they receive no outside help, in 44 percent of the cases in which minimalist stabilization operations are deployed, but only in 25 percent of the cases in which large-scale interventions are launched.

With so few instances of large interventions, however, such comparisons are tenuous. The results would change dramatically if readers disagreed about how to characterize a single outcome of a large intervention. Certainly the eventual outcomes of OIF and OEF-A will heavily influence how large interventions are perceived. If Iraq remains stable, then a fairly strong case can be made that large interventions

¹³ Both are coded as instances of ongoing war in our dataset.

dramatically increase the chances of a relatively successful outcome once a country has descended into a broad-based civil war (although the outcome would not justify preemptive invasions). On the other hand, if violence in both Iraq and Afghanistan continues at high levels or escalates significantly, then the historical record will suggest that large foreign interventions cannot significantly improve a partner state's odds of success in the most difficult operational environments.

Conclusions

Minimalist stabilization does not significantly improve a partner government's odds of victory, but it can do much to help partners stave off defeat. The explanation for this apparent contradiction lies in minimalist stabilization's tendency to produce mixed or indeterminate outcomes: military stalemates, negotiated solutions, or ambiguous arrangements in which the government relinquishes *de facto* control over much of its territory to rebel forces without ever reaching a negotiated settlement.

Such a conclusion provokes two critical questions: First, what is the value of avoiding defeat? And second, what nonmilitary instruments can be used instead of or in addition to military intervention to improve the odds of success? These questions will be explored in greater detail in the concluding chapter, once the simple quantitative results of this chapter are enriched by a discussion of specific cases.

Case Studies

The quantitative analysis of the last chapter demonstrated that minimalist stabilization typically can prevent defeat but not secure victory. It did not, however, explain *why* this pattern predominates. This chapter focuses on four case studies of minimalist stabilization—in El Salvador in the 1980s, the CAR in the 1990s, and Colombia and the Philippines in the past decade—to help identify why minimalist stabilization produces this pattern of results. One case was selected from each of the four operational environments discussed in Chapter Three in order to understand minimalist stabilization missions across a range of contexts. Although three of the four cases are U.S. interventions, one case of intervention by another country (France’s intervention in the CAR) was selected to provide some diversity. The Central African case also helps to illustrate the generalizability of our findings: Even when minimalist intervention seeks to thwart small-scale, urban movements at an early stage of conflict, it may fare no better than when it is used to counter broader-based, long-standing, rural insurgencies. Together the four cases in this chapter represent approximately one-sixth of all cases of minimalist stabilization in the past four decades.¹

The analysis of this chapter extends on the discussion of arguments in favor of and against minimalist stabilization presented in

¹ Note that the wars in Colombia and the Philippines have not ended, so they are not included in the quantitative analysis of Chapter Three. Because this chapter adopts a qualitative approach, it can analyze patterns without the same need for standardized coding rules as in the previous chapter. These two cases were included in the discussion because they have so frequently been cited as successes of minimalist stabilization.

Chapter Two. It finds that two factors in particular account for the prevalence of mixed outcomes in cases of minimalist stabilization:

- Military instruments have difficulty eliminating low-level violence, particularly in the societies in which military interventions typically occur.
- Only weak tools are available to address poor governance and stalemated politics.

Dominant military power can prevent an adversary from seizing and holding territory. It is much more limited as an instrument for fighting low-level insurgencies and terrorism. One recent study found that military might was responsible for bringing an end to only 7 percent of the 648 terrorist groups that existed between 1968 and 2006. Effective policing, in contrast, accounted for 40 percent of the cases in which terrorist groups were brought to an end.² Similarly, effective policing is critical to eliminating insurgencies.³ Yet developing effective host-nation police is an extremely difficult task—much more so than developing effective local militaries. Police are far more intertwined with other institutions of the state such as courts, corrections systems, and legal codes. A great many studies on foreign efforts to build capacity among local police forces have been deeply pessimistic.⁴ If foreign

² Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qaeda*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-741-1-RC, 2008.

³ See for instance David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006 [1964]; William Rosenau, “Low-Cost Trigger-Pullers”: *The Politics of Policing in the Context of Contemporary ‘State Building’ and Counterinsurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, WR-620, 2009; David H. Bayley and Robert M. Perito, *The Police in War: Fighting Insurgency, Terrorism, and Violent Crime*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010.

⁴ See for instance Mercedes S. Hinton and Tim Newburn, *Policing Developing Democracies*, New York: Routledge, 2009; Mike Brogden, “‘Horses for Courses’ and ‘Thin Blue Lines’: Community Policing in Transitional Society,” *Police Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2005; Bruce Baker, “Policing Post-Conflict Societies: Helping Out the State,” *Policing and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2009; Robert Davis, Nicole Henderson, and Cybele Merrick, “Community Policing: Variations on the Western Model in the Developing World,” *Police Practice and Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2003.

powers can help to build up local military capabilities but struggle to build effective local police forces, then this might help to account for minimalist stabilization's ability to degrade but not eliminate threats.

Even support to host-nation militaries, however, faces limits in a counterinsurgency context. Daniel Byman summarizes many of these limitations:

[A]llies frequently stray far from the counterinsurgency ideal, both militarily and politically. Their military culture often is characterized by poor intelligence; a lack of initiative; little integration of forces across units; soldiers who do not want to fight; bad officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs); and difficulties with training, learning, and creativity. In addition, the structural weaknesses have a direct political effect that can aid an insurgency by hindering the development and implementation of a national strategy, encouraging widespread corruption, alienating the military from the overall population, and offering the insurgents opportunities to penetrate the military. Taken together, these problems and divergent interests explain in part why allies often have security services that are poorly postured to fight insurgencies and why allies do not make the necessary reforms to improve their performance.⁵

Minimalist stabilization might partially offset these handicaps, but it will typically be inadequate to transform the host-nation force into one capable of defeating the insurgents. The limitations of host-nation militaries fighting a counterinsurgency are highlighted in the El Salvador case study below.

If an intervener's primary goal is to degrade and contain rather than defeat insurgents, then it may not matter that minimalist stabilization seldom yields outright victory. Yet, even such a limited goal carries a number of risks. External state sponsors may not be able to sustain their support of a host nation's security apparatus indefinitely. Eventual withdrawal of that support may quickly lead to a reversal of fortune and the eventual defeat of the government. This was precisely

⁵ Byman, 2006, pp. 81–82.

the outcome of the French intervention in the CAR discussed in one of the case studies below. Had the Soviet Union not collapsed when it did, this may also have been the outcome of U.S. support for the government of El Salvador, which was coming under mounting congressional pressure throughout the 1980s. Even if foreign powers can maintain their support for host nations' security sectors indefinitely, however, this support carries its own risks. Sir Robert Thompson, for instance, warned about the corrosive political effects of large military subsidies to South Vietnam in his classic work on counterinsurgency.⁶

The same political factors that inhibit security sector reform also hinder the effective cooptation of insurgents or measures that might deprive insurgent movements of their popular base of support. As the case study of the Philippines illustrates, if the state cannot deliver services equitably to its population, nor make the political compromises necessary to coopt a discontented population, nor effectively police the population from which an insurgency draws, then a successful resolution of a conflict is extremely difficult to achieve.

Unfortunately, minimalist stabilization provides relatively weak tools for improving the quality of host-nation governance. What many proponents take to be among its greatest strengths—its modest ambitions and reliance on local partners—also proves to be a weakness. Because minimalist stabilization works within existing power structures, it tends to reinforce precisely the same political system that gave rise to the conflict in the first place. Minimalist stabilization may in fact perpetuate conflict by failing to provide enough resources to eliminate the insurgency or to transform the local political system, yet at the same time providing sufficient resources that the host nation feels little need to reform itself. At least some observers claim that this accurately describes the El Salvador conflict in the 1980s.

Colombia may represent a partial exception to these general trends. It has proven capable of fighting an insurgency effectively, and it has well-developed programs to coopt insurgents and the populations from which they draw. Colombia is also far wealthier than most

⁶ Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, St. Petersburg, Fla.: Hailer Publishing, 2005 [1966], pp. 58–59.

countries suffering from civil wars, with well-developed state institutions and a long-standing democracy. Colombia, in short, may validate the judgment of Douglas Blaufarb in another of the counterinsurgency classics: Those states most likely to use foreign assistance effectively in a counterinsurgency campaign are precisely those that need it least.⁷

Moreover, a “smaller footprint” does not necessarily avoid nationalist blowback, as proponents of minimalist stabilization contend. French intervention in the CAR provoked considerable popular backlash, as did the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia in support of the Transitional Federal Government. British intervention on behalf of the government of Sierra Leone, on the other hand, enjoyed widespread support—indeed, most of the population of Sierra Leone was asking for more, not less, British involvement. What explains these differential outcomes? The British intervention led to the defeat of a deeply unpopular insurgent movement, the Revolutionary United Front. The French and Somali interventions, in contrast, created clear losers and failed to resolve the host nations’ conflicts. Backlashes against interveners, in other words, may be more a function of the success of the intervention in meeting the basic needs of the population rather than being a function of the intervention’s scale. The outcomes apparent in the quantitative analysis of Chapter Three and the case studies of this chapter suggest reason for skepticism about minimalist stabilization’s likelihood of success.

El Salvador and the FMLN, 1979–1991

The intervention in El Salvador was one of the first times after the Vietnam War that the United States attempted a minimalist intervention in a foreign conflict. By intervening, the United States attempted

to formulate a new approach to a painfully familiar military problem. The essence of that approach [was] to provide a besieged ally with weapons, ammunition, and other equipment, economic aid,

⁷ Blaufarb, 1977.

intelligence support, strategic counsel, and tactical training—while preserving the principle that the war remains ultimately theirs to lose.⁸

Upon taking office President Ronald Reagan made the war in El Salvador the focal point of his anti-Communist foreign policy.⁹ By the end of the war, the United States had saved the government of El Salvador from defeat—but it had not defeated the insurgents. Instead, intervention led to a stalemate that showed no signs of leading to a positive resolution before the collapse of the Soviet Union broke the deadlock. The outcome of this conflict is thus consistent with the quantitative analysis in the previous chapter. This chapter sheds light on the reasons for this outcome—and for the stable peace that eventually followed the conflict. More specifically, it highlights three points:

- The billions of dollars in U.S. assistance and the presence of U.S. advisors helped prevent defeat, but it was inadequate to turn El Salvador's military into a competent counterinsurgency force, and it was unable to generate significant leverage for political reforms.
- The military stalemate secured the United States' minimal strategic aims: It prevented the government of El Salvador from falling to a communist insurgency. Had the Soviet Union not collapsed, however, it is not at all clear that the United States could have sustained its support—which was coming under increasing congressional pressure—as long as the insurgency could sustain itself. The strategic success achieved, in other words, was only partial and may well have been temporary but for the Soviet collapse.
- As with most other insurgencies, it was a powerful shift in the political and diplomatic contours of the conflict rather than a change in the military balance of forces that ultimately brought an end to the fighting.

⁸ A. J. Bacevich, James D. Hallums, Richard H. White, and Thomas F. Young, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Washington, D.C.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988. p. v.

⁹ David Holiday, "El Salvador's 'Model' Democracy," *Current History*, February 2005, p. 78.

The minimalist stabilization mission in El Salvador thus shares similarities with many other such interventions. Such missions can be useful for preventing the defeat of an endangered regime, but such operations can be expected to secure U.S. strategic goals only if they can be convincingly linked to a political or diplomatic strategy. In the case of El Salvador, the United States' political and diplomatic strategies failed. It was only an utterly unexpected and unrelated event that secured the outcomes for which the United States intervened.

Conflict Narrative

El Salvador's civil war was the deadliest contemporary internal conflict in Latin America, killing 80,000 soldiers and civilians and displacing a million people—one fifth of the country's population.¹⁰ The Marxist rebel force, the FMLN, representing the extremely poor agricultural labor force, fought for agrarian reform against the government, representing the wealthy land-owning class in "the most skewed land tenure system in Latin America."¹¹

The conflict erupted in 1979 after the military government began to use force to eliminate the FMLN.¹² Between 1979 and 1981 the government killed tens of thousands of unarmed civilians perceived to be supporters of leftist groups.¹³ This repression generated significant support for the FMLN;¹⁴ more than 10,000 people joined their ranks between 1980 and 1983.¹⁵ Strengthened, the FMLN launched

¹⁰ David Garibay, *A Peace Built on Forgetting Demobilized Combatants in Post-War El Salvador*, UNESCO, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp. 467–468.

¹¹ Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-4042-USDP, 1991, p. 9; Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 1–2.

¹² Schwarz, 1991, pp. 85–86.

¹³ Mark Peceny and William D. Stanley, "Counterinsurgency in El Salvador," *Politics Society*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2010, p. 69.

¹⁴ T. David Mason, "The Civil War in El Salvador: A Retrospective Analysis," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1999, p. 194.

¹⁵ Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 73.

a conventional-style war against the Salvadoran armed forces (Fuerza Armada de El Salvador, or FAES) in 1981.¹⁶ By the end of 1983 the FMLN had roughly 12,000 troops, roughly the size of the FAES at the beginning of the war.¹⁷ Concurrently, the FAES used U.S. economic assistance to buy helicopters and fixed-wing ground attack aircraft and launched an aerial campaign.¹⁸ The FMLN subsequently abandoned its ground campaign and instead adopted classic guerilla tactics. The FAES did not adapt but continued to conventionally combat the insurgents despite counterinsurgency training provided by the United States. This mismatch of tactics combined with a relative parity of strength set the war on a path toward stalemate, broken after external supporters of both sides began to disengage following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.

The military stalemate and termination of external support laid the foundations for a peace agreement and political inclusion of the FMLN. As part of a deal brokered by the UN, the FMLN lay down its weapons and fully integrated into the democratic process as a political party, while the government created a civilian police and dismissed nearly all of the top leaders of the armed forces.¹⁹ In the presidential elections in 1994, the first since the civil war ended, the FMLN party secured 20 to 25 percent of the vote.²⁰ Over the next 15 years, the FMLN slowly increased its political power to ultimately win a legislative majority²¹ and the presidency in 2009.²²

¹⁶ Wood, 2003, p. 25.

¹⁷ Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 75.

¹⁸ Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 79.

¹⁹ Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 84.

²⁰ Michael E. Allison, "The Legacy of Violence on Post-Civil War Elections: The Case of El Salvador," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 45, No. 9, January 2010, p. 121.

²¹ Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 84.

²² Paul D. Almeida, "Social Movements, Political Parties and Electoral Triumph in El Salvador," *North America Congress on Latin America*, Report on the Americas, November/December 2009, p. 16.

Significant Characteristics of the Operational Environment

Relevant Insurgent Characteristics

Foreign intervention helped the FMLN wage its insurgency. Nicaraguan Sandinistas funneled weapons from Vietnam, demolition materials from Czechoslovakia, and equipment from East Germany, Bulgaria, and Hungary.²³ Cuba promised arms, money, and training only if the disparate groups unified together, and it sustained this support to the FMLN throughout the war.²⁴ Cuba did not give El Salvador weapons directly but brokered deals from third-party countries such as the Soviet Union, Vietnam, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ethiopia.²⁵ Most importantly, the training-of-trainers Cuba provided was extensive—"Cuban instruction had a ripple effect which permeated the FMLN organization and had a much greater impact than the mere numbers would suggest."²⁶ Loss of this external support following the end of the Cold War broke the military stalemate and spurred the FMLN to negotiate. "The FMLN realized that it could no longer depend on the socialist bloc to support its war effort."²⁷

Relevant Government Characteristics

The FAES achieved a few operational successes, the most significant being the aerial assault on the FMLN in 1984 that decreased the FMLN's strength. However, the military was unable to create an agile, responsive counterinsurgency force. Its unwillingness to absorb and utilize U.S. counterinsurgency training prolonged the conflict and played a part in the ultimate outcome of stalemate. According to the so-called "Colonel's Report," a controversial assessment of U.S. training and assistance to El Salvador written in 1988, the FAES are "most

²³ Major Paul P. Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979–1992," *Small Wars Journal*, 1996, p. 17.

²⁴ Andrea Onate, "The Red Affair: FMLN-Cuban Relations During the Salvadoran Civil War, 1981–92," *Cold War History*, Vol. 11, No. 2, May 2001, pp. 138, 549.

²⁵ Onate, 2001, p. 143.

²⁶ Onate, 2001, p. 142.

²⁷ Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 70.

comfortable operating in battalion-size formations, [reliant] on helicopters and trucks for mobility, and . . . dependent upon heavy firepower. . . . In the field, unwieldy battalions continue to expend too much energy pursuing guerillas, without purpose or result.”²⁸ Additionally, the agrarian reforms implemented by the government did not go far enough to coopt the insurgents, and the United States could not persuade the government to go farther.²⁹ Its dependence on the land-owning elite for political support consistently led the government to subvert the land reforms suggested by the United States.³⁰

As a previous RAND report, written by Benjamin Schwarz in 1991, concluded, one of the biggest reasons for the ineffectiveness of U.S. assistance was that the United States had very little leverage. The FAES and the Salvadoran government knew that the U.S. feared “losing” El Salvador to the Communists, so any threat to cut off funding or aid for failure to implement reforms was obviously an empty one.³¹

Results of the U.S. Intervention

For the Reagan administration, the purpose of intervening in El Salvador was to “draw a line in the sand” against Communist subversion.³² The United States dedicated significant financial resources, spending \$6 billion in foreign assistance,³³ including \$1 billion in military aid, throughout the conflict.³⁴ Legal restrictions limited the number of U.S. trainers in-country at any one time; the U.S. Congress (and the American public), wary of another protracted war with the possibility

²⁸ Bacevich et al., 1988, pp. 37–38.

²⁹ Schwarz, 1991, p. 9.

³⁰ Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991, p. 35.

³¹ Schwarz, 1991, p. 87.

³² Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 75.

³³ All dollar amounts are in U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted.

³⁴ Holiday, 2005, p. 78.

of mission creep, capped the number of advisors assigned to a one-year tour in El Salvador at 55.³⁵

Of the three goals the administration had for this intervention—combat, deter, and/or defeat the FMLN; strengthen democratic principles and civil society; and achieve broad-based socioeconomic development—the United States was able only to combat the FMLN and ultimately to bring the war to a stalemate.³⁶ “The Reagan administration . . . did not meet its own standard for success, which was the decisive military and political defeat of the FMLN.”³⁷ After ten years of working with the United States, the FAES rarely and reluctantly used the training provided by the United States, despite being capable of implementing U.S. training in tactics and doctrine.³⁸ With respect to solidifying democracy, though human rights abuses decreased and the military appeared to support the civilian (and civilian-elected) government, the FAES still exerted considerable power behind the scenes.³⁹

Conclusions

El Salvador is similar to many other cases of minimalist stabilization in that the U.S. intervention alone did not ensure outright victory but rather prevented defeat. In El Salvador, the combination of stalemate between the two sides and their loss of foreign support following the end of the Cold War compelled both sides to negotiate a settlement. The case suggests a number of lessons.

First, through preventing defeat, minimalist stabilization may lead to a stalemate and increase the odds of a negotiated solution. The mutual realization that neither the host nation forces nor insurgency was strong enough to defeat the other helped pave the way for a negotiated settlement.

³⁵ Cale, 1996, pp. 14–15.

³⁶ Michael Childress, *The Effectiveness of U.S. Training Efforts in Internal Defense and Development: The Cases of El Salvador and Honduras*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-250-USDP, 1995, p. 18.

³⁷ Peceny and Stanley, 2010, p. 68.

³⁸ Childress, 1995, p. 42.

³⁹ Childress, 1995, p. 42.

Second, the loss of external support can spur both parties to negotiate. The collapse of the socialist bloc, the FMLN's major source of funding and materiel, and the loss of U.S. support for the FAES, brought both sides to a settlement. Had the Soviet bloc not collapsed, it is not clear how long the fighting might have lasted.

Finally, host nation forces often adopt conventional and highly repressive tactics to combat an insurgency because the partner state lacks the capacity or incentives to fight counterinsurgency campaigns.⁴⁰ In El Salvador, after the FMLN switched to guerilla warfare the FAES did not adjust but continued to pursue the rebels conventionally. U.S. training and advising improved the overall professionalism and skills of the armed forces but were not able to transform them into a counterinsurgency force capable of defeating the FMLN. Such challenges in building partner capacity have significant implications for the sustainability of U.S. assistance.

Colombia and the FARC, 1978 to the Present

Colombia's war with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) is one of the longest-running counterinsurgency campaigns in the world. The FARC grew rapidly from the late 1980s through the early years of the new millennium. Indeed, by the early 2000s some observers warned that the FARC posed an existential threat to the government of Colombia. Since 2002, however, the war has undergone a remarkable turnaround, with FARC numbers reduced to nearly one-third of what they were at their height. This turnaround coincided with a substantial increase in U.S. assistance to the government of Colombia, consisting of an estimated \$7 billion in military aid and several hundred advisors since 2000.⁴¹ This minimalist stabilization effort is often touted as a tremendous success and one of the preeminent exam-

⁴⁰ Byman, 2006, p. 90. See also Hinton and Newburn, 2009, on the broader problems of building police forces in developing countries.

⁴¹ Michael Shifter, "A Decade of Plan Colombia: Time for a New Approach," *Politica Exterior*, June 21, 2010.

ples of what a smaller-scale, more modest approach to stabilization can accomplish.⁴²

Without minimizing the importance of the government of Colombia's military victories, there are a number of reasons to question the extent to which the case is a "success story" for minimalist stabilization:

- Colombia had both the capabilities and the will to fight the insurgency, a situation that often does not apply elsewhere.
- Although the FARC has been dramatically reduced, it remains as large as it was in the 1990s and appears to be returning to the guerrilla strategies that enabled it to endure for four decades.
- The FARC is trafficking as much cocaine as ever, suggesting that the United States has not achieved the strategic goal motivating its intervention.

These issues fit the same pattern seen in many other cases of minimalist stabilization: ambiguous military outcomes, the primacy of politics and state capacity over military capabilities, and the frequent failure of operational military successes to accomplish U.S. strategic purposes.

The first reason why the lessons of Colombia should not be overdrawn is that the relative significance of U.S. assistance is highly debated. This is not to say that U.S. support has been irrelevant. Rather, U.S. assistance appears to have reinforced a change of policy initiated under Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe. In 2002 Uribe was elected, and it was under his administration that the government of Colombia began to achieve a series of military victories. This same year saw a change in U.S. policy in which the United States allowed its military aid to be used for counterinsurgency.⁴³ Consequently, it is difficult to gauge the relative importance of U.S. support. Though U.S. aid has been substantial in absolute terms, as a proportion of overall Colombian spending—and even as a proportion of Colombian defense

⁴² See for instance Paul Wolfowitz and Michael O'Hanlon, "Plan Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy*, October 28, 2011.

⁴³ Shifter, 2010.

spending—it has not been particularly large. The example of Colombia thus appears to fit a pattern recognized decades ago by Douglas Blaufarb: In those states that can best make use of outside assistance—that is, where the host nation both is capable and has the will to reform itself—outside intervention is generally superfluous or at least matters only at the margins.⁴⁴

The progress that has been made is important, but less so than what is often claimed by those who cite Colombia as a success story. While the FARC has been degraded, it numbers roughly as many troops as it did in the mid-1990s and remains the best equipped, trained, and organized guerilla organization in Latin America.⁴⁵ Additionally, the FARC has at least partially been able to rebound from defeat, supported by revenues from cocaine trafficking.⁴⁶ Colombia may well be reaching the limit of what it can achieve through military means.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the United States has made no progress in reducing narcotics trafficking from Colombia and by some accounts has actually made the problem worse.⁴⁸ Since countering the flow of narcotics to the United States was the strategic goal motivating U.S. intervention, it is not at all clear that the operational military successes achieved will further U.S. strategic goals.

⁴⁴ Blaufarb, 1977.

⁴⁵ Security—Colombia, *Jane's*, June 2011.

⁴⁶ “Colombia’s Santos Hails ‘Beginning of End’ for FARC,” BBC News, September 26, 2010.

⁴⁷ Jason Vauters and Michael L. R. Smith, “A Question of Escalation—From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism: Analysing US Strategy in Colombia,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 17, No. 2, June 2006, p. 190. See also Marc Chernick’s testimony before the House Government Reform Committee, September 24, 2004.

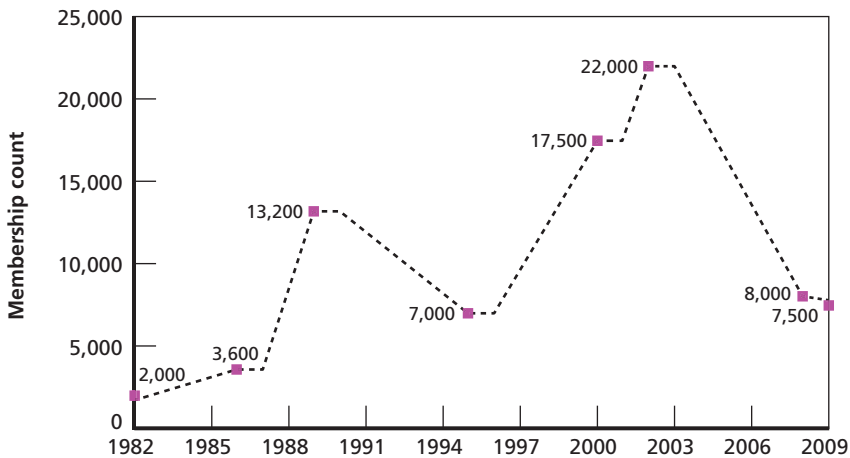
⁴⁸ Arlene B. Tickner, “Colombia and the United States: From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism,” *Current History*, February 2003, p. 72; Mark Peceny and Michael Durnan, “The FARC’s Best Friend: U.S. Antidrug Policies and the Deepening of Colombia’s Civil War in the 1990s,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, p. 100.

Conflict Narrative

The FARC formed in 1966 and became a sizeable force in the late 1980s.⁴⁹ Figure 4.1 charts the changing size of the FARC since 1982.

Originally a communist insurgent organization, the FARC sought to overthrow the ruling order in Colombia and drive out the “imperialist influences” of the United States within Latin America.⁵⁰ Rhetorically, at least, the FARC’s goals have not changed. The group continues to push for land and wealth redistribution, state control of natural

Figure 4.1
FARC Membership Strength, 1982–2009



SOURCES: Thomas Marks, “Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency,” Strategic Studies Institute, January 2002; *Plan Colombia: Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance*, United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-09-71, October 2008; International Institute for Strategic Studies; Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1339-AF, 2001.

RAND MG1226-4.1

⁴⁹ George H. Franco, “Their Darkest Hour: Colombia’s Government and the Narco-Insurgency,” *Parameters*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 2000, p. 83.

⁵⁰ Franco, 2000, p. 84.

resources, and increases in government spending on social welfare.⁵¹ Because its ideological and social agenda did not consistently mobilize sufficient numbers of supporters, the FARC aligned itself with criminal organizations in the early 1980s and became involved in the drug trade as part of its strategy.⁵² The revenue stream the FARC receives from its partnership with the drug trade can exceed \$100 million per year, and this collusion has caused some analysts to label the FARC a “cocaine-producing narco-terrorism organization.”⁵³

The FARC reached a strategic high-water mark in 2002. The FARC had become so well entrenched in the mountains around Bogota that it was able to launch a mortar attack on the presidential palace. In response, a sustained military and police offensive drove the FARC away from Bogota and into the jungles and mountains of the southern and western provinces.⁵⁴ FARC defections increased partly as a result of this offensive and the concomitant increase in the number of FARC leaders killed or captured. The FARC today numbers around 8,000 soldiers and has evolved into a lean and potentially resilient force.

Significant Characteristics of the Operational Environment

Relevant Insurgent Characteristics

The FARC has developed an increasingly symbiotic relationship with the *cocaleros* or coca-growing farmers and draws most of its revenues from taxing the coca crops, paste production, and transportation of drugs in and out of the regions it controls.⁵⁵ The FARC controls the majority of the Colombian market on cocaine production exported abroad and oversees half of the world’s supply of cocaine.⁵⁶ Sixty per cent of the cocaine consumed by the United States is produced by the

⁵¹ Franco, 2000, p. 84.

⁵² Marks, 2002, p. 6.

⁵³ Robert Killebrew and Jennifer Bernal, “Crime Wars: Gangs, Cartels and U.S. National Security,” *Center for a New American Security*, September 2010, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment—South America, Colombia, October 21, 2010d.

⁵⁵ Franco, 2000, p. 87.

⁵⁶ Paramilitary groups also play a role, but it is difficult to assess their importance.

FARC.⁵⁷ Analysts estimate that the FARC earns roughly \$100 million per year via drug trafficking alone and supplements these revenues with the money it derives from kidnappings and extortion.⁵⁸ These drug ties have undoubtedly lengthened the conflict between the FARC and the Colombian government.

Even if the FARC's drug revenues were immediately eliminated, the FARC would still be able to operate for a number of years. If, as some analysts have calculated, the cost of maintaining an armed fighter is \$3 a day, the FARC, at its 2009 size of 7,500 fighters, could maintain itself for about \$8 million a year.⁵⁹ The gulf between costs and revenue, therefore, means that even greatly reducing the drug revenue would not quickly eliminate the FARC. Having fought in the mountains for more than 40 years, and with a secure revenue stream to fund its military operations, the FARC is an extremely resilient organization.⁶⁰

Relevant Government Characteristics

The Colombian government has pursued a wide variety of strategies, from appeasement to complex military operations. Most presidents in the 1980s and 1990s favored accommodation, peace treaties, and small-scale military campaigns. It is notable that the FARC grew in number throughout this period, spiking at 17,500 around the time President Andres Pastrana ceded territory the size of Switzerland to the FARC in 1998.⁶¹ The Colombian government began to make the most significant and consistent progress against the FARC after Alvaro Uribe took office in 2002 and strengthened the military component of "Plan Colombia." This was a complex counternarcotics plan that combined

⁵⁷ Killebrew and Bernal, 2010, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Killebrew and Bernal, 2010, p. 27; estimates of the revenue the FARC generates via the drug trade vary widely; \$100 million annually is a conservative, but accurate, estimate. See also Stephanie Hanson, "FARC, ELN: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas," Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, August 19, 2009.

⁵⁹ "War and Drugs in Colombia," *International Crisis Group*, Latin America Report No. 27, Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, January 2005, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Lisa Wüstholtz, "FARC Is Weakened, but Far from Dead," *International Relations and Security Network*, November 24, 2011.

⁶¹ Shifter, 2010.

military and police action with social incentives to isolate the FARC from pockets of domestic support. It also sought to “reduce the production of illicit drugs (primarily cocaine) by 50 percent in six years and improve security in Colombia by re-claiming control of areas held by illegal armed groups.”⁶² Plan Colombia received significant support—approximately \$1 billion—from the United States through the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, the Foreign Military Financing program, and the Department of Defense’s central counternarcotics account.⁶³ This support made Colombia both the third-highest recipient of U.S. military aid in the world⁶⁴ and the leading recipient of direct U.S. military training.⁶⁵

Between the time Uribe took office and the time he left in 2010, FARC numbers shrunk 70 percent, from 22,000 to 7,500, the greatest reduction since the beginning of the conflict. Uribe expanded the security component of Plan Colombia with a Democratic Security and Defense Policy, which had at its core a “Clear, hold and consolidate” strategy.⁶⁶ Through this policy, the Colombian government increased the size of the military from 279,000 in 2000 to 415,000 in 2007.⁶⁷ “Plan Patriota,” a subset of the broader Democratic Security policy, attempted to clear the FARC from areas surrounding Bogota. The first operation of Plan Patriota netted “Simon Trinidad,” the most senior FARC member captured to that point.

In January 2007 the Uribe administration announced a six-year follow-on strategy, Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential, which cleared one region at a time and consolidated military gains through

⁶² Killebrew and Bernal, 2010, p. 23.

⁶³ Connie Veillette, “Plan Colombia: A Progress Report,” Congressional Research Service, CRS Report RL32774, May 9, 2005, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schulz, “Colombia’s Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, March 5, 1999, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Jaime Zuluaga Nieto and Richard Stoller, “U.S. Security Policies and United States–Colombia Relations,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 34, No. 1, January 2007, p. 117.

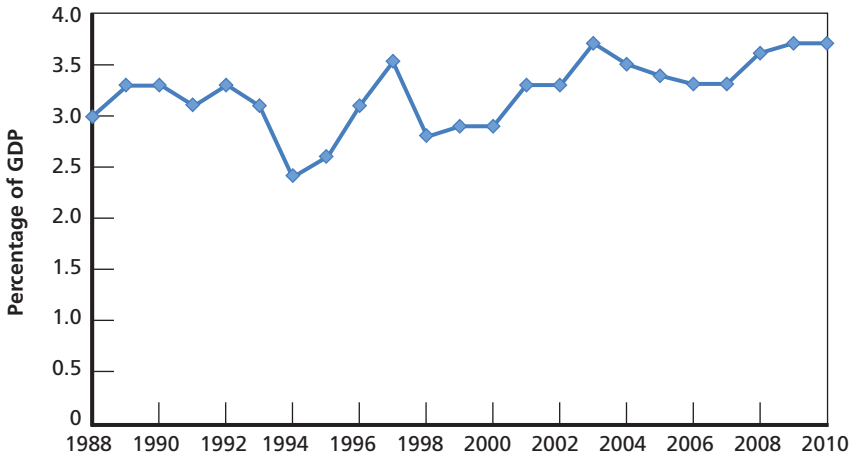
⁶⁶ *Plan Colombia*, 2008, p. 12.

⁶⁷ *Plan Colombia*, 2008, p. 13.

coordinated civil-military assistance and social services.⁶⁸ In 2007 a cross-border strike into Ecuador killed senior FARC leader “Raul Reyes” and captured his commanders. In 2009 the FARC released its last known foreign hostage, Eric Roland Larsson of Sweden. And in 2010, the year Juan Manuel Santos assumed the presidency, a military raid killed FARC Secretariat member “Mono Jojoy” and 20 others and seized computers and USB drives.

It is important to note that, during Uribe’s administration, military expenditure as a percentage of GDP was at its highest levels since 1988.⁶⁹ In constant 2000 U.S. dollars, this means that in 2003 Colombia spent around \$4 billion on military expenditures alone. Figure 4.2 shows that Colombia doubled down on military expenditures at the same time as it received U.S. military aid.

Figure 4.2
Colombia Military Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP, 1988–2010



SOURCE: World Bank Indicators, as of January 23, 2012.

RAND MG1226-4.2

⁶⁸ *Plan Colombia*, 2008, pp. 12, 14.

⁶⁹ World Bank Indicators, accessed January 23, 2012.

Results of the U.S. Intervention

The successes of Plan Colombia are primarily attributable to the Colombian government, despite the U.S. being Colombia's biggest supplier of military and financial aid. Colombia is wealthy enough to spend billions of dollars on its war with the FARC and capable of engineering its own campaign plans. Washington's \$1 billion military aid package for Plan Colombia paled in comparison to the \$7.5 billion apportioned by President Pastrana,⁷⁰ and the strategic and tactical plans were the Colombians' own design.⁷¹ The U.S. military presence has also been minimal, compared with that of the Colombian armed forces. A provision in the Plan Colombia aid package caps the number of U.S. military personnel and citizen contractors allowed in Colombia at any one time at 800 soldiers and 600 contractors. The law also forbids the U.S. Armed Forces, including contractors, from participating in any combat operation.⁷² On its own, therefore, it is difficult to say that U.S. financial and military assistance has altered the balance of forces between the Colombian military and the FARC.⁷³

The United States' original strategic goals of dismantling the drug cartels and disrupting the source of revenue so critical to the FARC have also met with mixed success. One study found "no evidence that the aid shock reduces coca cultivation, despite the anti-narcotics bent of U.S. assistance."⁷⁴ In many cases, these policies have had the exact opposite effect. U.S. antinarcotics policies have "shaped the Colombian civil war by shifting the balance of power among the combatants."⁷⁵ By eliminating the drug cartels, the United States eliminated a formidable

⁷⁰ Liz Harper, "Colombia's Civil War," Online NewsHour, May 2002.

⁷¹ Arlene B. Tickner, "Colombia and the United States: From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism," *Current History*, February 2003, p. 72.

⁷² Dario E. Teicher, "The Decisive Phase of Colombia's War on Narco-Terrorism," U.S.A.F. Counterproliferation Center, Future Warfare Series No. 28, January 2005, pp. 9–10.

⁷³ Rabasa and Chalk, 2001, p. 68.

⁷⁴ Oeindrila Dube and Suresh Naidu, "Bases, Bullets and Ballots: The Effect of U.S. Military Aid on Political Conflict on Colombia," Center for Global Development, Working Paper 197, January 2010, p. 26.

⁷⁵ Peceny and Durnan, 2006, p. 101.

military opponent of the FARC and allowed the FARC to fill the power vacuum. Defeated cartels and other criminal networks paid taxes to the FARC, generating more revenue.⁷⁶ Aerial fumigation, a tactic of both Plan Colombia and the U.S. antinarcotics effort, sparked support and new membership for the FARC among the *cocaleros*, for whom the fumigation threatened their health and livelihoods.⁷⁷ Finally, drug production and export have increased. From 2000 to 2006, cocaine production increased by 4 percent, with 550 metric tons produced in 2006 compared to 530 metric tons in 2000. The amount of cocaine flown to the United States also increased, from 460 metric tons in 2000 to 620 metric tons in 2007.⁷⁸

Paradoxically, as drug production has increased, FARC membership has fallen by more than 50 percent since 2002.⁷⁹ In 2007, the Colombian Ministry of Defense reported that it had captured or killed roughly 4,600 FARC combatants and about 2,500 had demobilized, and in 2008, over 1,700 FARC combatants had already demobilized by July.⁸⁰

In 2007 the Colombian government either fully or partially controlled about 90 percent of the country—a major improvement from the 1990s when there was at least one FARC front in each department.⁸¹ Overall levels of violence decreased. U.S. State Department data from September 2010 reported that Plan Colombia resulted in an 80-percent decrease in kidnappings, a 40-percent decrease in homicides, and a 76-percent decrease in terrorist attacks between 2000 and 2007.⁸² (A report from the *Economist* in July 2011, however, stated that kidnappings had increased by 16 percent.)⁸³ Additionally, in June 2007,

⁷⁶ Peceny and Durnan, 2006, p. 104.

⁷⁷ Peceny and Durnan, 2006, p. 97.

⁷⁸ *Plan Colombia*, 2008, pp. 19, 22.

⁷⁹ Jane's, 2010d.

⁸⁰ *Plan Colombia*, 2008, p. 25.

⁸¹ *Plan Colombia*, 2008, p. 24.

⁸² Killebrew and Bernal, 2010, p. 24.

⁸³ "The FARC Is Not Finished Yet," *Economist*, July 7, 2011.

the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy reported that antidrug efforts had reduced the FARC's overall profits per kilogram of cocaine from roughly \$390 in 2003 to roughly \$257 in 2005.⁸⁴

This evidence suggests two conclusions. First, Plan Colombia, with U.S. support, has inflicted considerable costs on the FARC and has diminished the threat the FARC insurgency poses to Colombia's political stability.⁸⁵ Second, despite its decimated force and the lower drug profits, the FARC is remarkably resilient. Plan Colombia, with U.S. support, has only *degraded* the FARC. The FARC remains as large as it was in the mid-1990s, and some believe it is bouncing back and returning to guerilla tactics.⁸⁶ Narcotics trafficking continues at levels little changed throughout the decade—and coca cultivation has increased.⁸⁷ To avoid direct interaction with the advancing Colombian military, the FARC now favors land mines and improvised explosive devices. Additionally, the FARC counters the military's skill at large-scale raids by retreating to and operating in territory and terrain on the borders with Ecuador and Venezuela where it is easier for the rebels to hide.⁸⁸ And, though their numbers are few, at least some observers claim that FARC members are now "radicalized" and "hardcore."⁸⁹

Conclusions

The evidence presented here suggests three reasons for us to treat with some caution claims that the United States' support for the government of Colombia has been a major success story. First, although U.S. assistance may have contributed to the operational successes scored by the Colombian government in recent years, the main impetus appears to have been Colombia's own policies and capabilities, not U.S. support. It is rare for a host nation to be as wealthy and capable as Colombia in

⁸⁴ *Plan Colombia*, 2008, p. 25.

⁸⁵ Peceny and Durnan, 2006, p. 111.

⁸⁶ Wüstholtz, 2011.

⁸⁷ Killebrew and Bernal, 2010, p. 23; Shifter, 2010.

⁸⁸ Wüstholtz, 2011.

⁸⁹ "The FARC Is Not Finished Yet," 2011.

this case. Second, though Colombia has reduced the levels of violence and reclaimed lost territory, the FARC appears to be successfully adapting and continuing the fight at a reduced level. Third, the United States has not achieved the strategic goal motivating its original intervention: to cripple the drug trade. Coca cultivation has not steadily decreased, and the availability and price of drugs have changed very little.

Colombia illustrates both the necessity and the limits of military instruments where the insurgency is extremely well funded: Uribe's aggressive approach has significantly diminished the insurgency, but there appears to be a floor beneath which the insurgency cannot be reduced through military means alone so long as U.S. drug policies make narcotics trafficking extremely lucrative. Given this reality, two strategies are potentially viable. Ideally, an end to the conflict could be secured by combining the gains made in the military realm with civil capacity building and political reforms designed to entice insurgents into nonviolent political participation.⁹⁰ If such an approach proves untenable, the best that may be possible are actions to mitigate the negative consequences of the insurgency.

Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines, 2002 to the Present

OEF-P is widely heralded as a model case of minimalist stabilization. The United States has been able to suppress targeted terrorist groups at the relatively low cost of \$52 million per year and with a commitment of only 600 U.S. troops.⁹¹ Despite numerous and important operational successes, however, long-term strategic success has thus far been elusive. U.S. goals and aid have narrowly focused on the counterterrorist (CT) mission without paying due attention to the separatist movement that has weakened the ability of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to exercise effective influence in the Mus-

⁹⁰ "Colombia: President Santos's Conflict Resolution Opportunity," Latin America Report No. 34, Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, October 13, 2010.

⁹¹ Boot and Bennett, "2009.

lim-majority regions. Separatists have provided various forms of direct operational and funding support to the terrorists and have inspired the Muslim population both to provide sanctuary to and—in some cases—to join regional terrorist groups. Indeed, there is evidence that Filipino civilians, both Muslim and otherwise, become more interested in terrorism precisely when their democratic and power-sharing options break down. It is therefore significant that one element missing from U.S. strategy in the region is a concerted effort to bring about lasting political consolidation and change, either directly or indirectly through influence over the GRP.

Despite significant operational successes over the course of the past decade, the United States has not eliminated the threat it sought to counter. What comes next? The United States can continue its CT operations indefinitely. It can hope that the GRP is finally able to achieve the political resolution of the conflict that has eluded it for decades. Or it can withdraw its forces, in which case it is likely to face a renewed terrorist threat from the region.

What does the case tell us about minimalist stabilization more generally? So long as operations can be sustained indefinitely, then it may not matter that minimalist stabilization seldom contributes to outright victory or that a political resolution of a conflict appears to be a distant prospect. But policymakers should then be aware that minimalist stabilization missions may be semipermanent commitments.

Conflict Narrative

The most powerful terrorist organization in the Philippines is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), founded by Ustadz Abdurajak Janjalani, whose *nom de guerre* in the Afghan war was Abu Sayyaf (Father of the Swordsman). Janjalani wanted to form an Iranian-inspired Islamic state in the southern Philippines partitioned from non-Muslims.⁹² ASG receives a substantial amount of funding through its kidnap-for-ransom opera-

⁹² Rustico O. Guerrero, "Philippine Terrorism and Insurgency: What to Do About the Abu Sayyaf Group," *Storming Media*, 2002, p. 15; David C. Palilonis, *Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines: A Demonstration of Economy of Force*, Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, May 2009, p. 5.

tions and from supporters as a result of these notorious operations. ASG often targets foreign nationals as kidnapping victims, including foreign tourists, nongovernmental organization workers, and missionaries.⁹³ Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a militant Islamic group with cells in many Southeast Asian countries, also operates in the Philippines. Like ASG, JI also targets tourist locations—its most recent serious attack was a series of suicide bombings in Bali in 2005.⁹⁴

OEF-P was created to hunt down ASG and JI fighters in the Philippines after the September 11 attacks in the United States.⁹⁵ Joint Task Force 510 (JTF-510) from United States Special Operations Command, Pacific, deployed to Zamboanga, Philippines, in Mindanao. Because political concerns limited the force to 600 personnel in the Joint Operations Area,⁹⁶ JTF-510 deployed 150 U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers in January 2002 to train, advise, and assist Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) soldiers in Mindanao and on Basilan Island, as well as 450 support personnel to Edwin Andrews Air Base on Zamboanga, and 50 personnel and helicopters to Mactan Air Base in Cebu.⁹⁷ JTF-510 transitioned into Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines (JSOTF-P), which marked a more sustained training, advising, and assistance mission.⁹⁸

As a result of the U.S. intervention in the archipelago, ASG's strength fell from more than 1,200 in 2002 to fewer than 500 by

⁹³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—Southeast Asia, "Security, Philippines," 2010b.

⁹⁴ Council on Foreign Relations, *Background: Jemaah Islamiyah (a.k.a. Jemaah Islamiyah)*, June 19, 2009.

⁹⁵ Palilonis, 2009, p. 8.

⁹⁶ Larry Niksch, *Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation*, Washington, D.C., Congressional Research Service, April 2003; C. H. Briscoe, "Balikatan Exercise Spearheaded ARSOF Operations in the Philippines," *Special Warfare*, Vol. 17, No. 1, September 2004, pp. 16–25; William J. Clark, Christopher S. Kelley, and Justin M. Bummara, *Analysis of Maritime Support Vessels and Acquisition Methods Utilized to Support Maritime Irregular Warfare*, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, June 2010.

⁹⁷ The additional 50 personnel in Cebu were allowed because they were deployed outside the Joint Operations Area (Niksch, 2003; and Briscoe, 2004).

⁹⁸ David P. Fridovich and Fred T. Krawchuk, "Winning in the Pacific: The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Vol. 44, 2007, p. 24.

2009. JI's numbers were considerably smaller—estimates in 2003 ranged between 45 and a few hundred.⁹⁹ Though the actual number is unknown, 2009 estimates do not seem to suggest any significant decline in JI membership. Some asserted that the group had fewer than 100 members left in the Philippines at this time, while others (including the U.S. State Department) estimate that total JI membership in the region as of 2009 varied from 100 to 1,000.¹⁰⁰ It is therefore difficult to assess the effectiveness of U.S. operations in eliminating JI. Meanwhile, the presence of a longstanding Muslim separatist movement concentrated in the south of the country in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has made the CT mission of OEF-P more difficult. The highly religious Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), formed in 1984, is the largest separatist organization, numbering 8,000–10,000 as of 2009.¹⁰¹ The MILF began a series of campaigns against the GRP in 1998 in order to create a separate Muslim state in Mindanao and thwart the goals of Filipino nationalists.¹⁰² Although the MILF has denied having ties to terrorist organizations, several reports note that ASG, JI, and the MILF support each other with funding, training, and operational support.¹⁰³

The MILF has long been engaged in sporadic fighting and negotiations with the GRP.¹⁰⁴ Negotiations between the MILF and GRP frequently stall over power-sharing issues. The most recent setback took place in August 2008 when the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that a plan to grant the Muslim region a large degree of autonomy was unconstitutional. In response, several of the MILF “base commands” (a few

⁹⁹ Simon Elegant, “Elevated Threat,” *Time Magazine*, October 27, 2003.

¹⁰⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, 2009.

¹⁰¹ Boot and Bennett, 2009, p. 22.

¹⁰² Daniel G. Amegin, *Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines: A Model for Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations in Weak or Failing States*, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air Command and Staff College, 2008, p. 8.

¹⁰³ Zachary Abuza, “The Philippines Chips Away at the Abu Sayyaf Group’s Strength,” *CTC Sentinel*, West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ B. A. Patty, “To Raise Them Up. Part 1: The Lesser and Greater Insurgencies of the Philippines,” *Long War Journal*, October 15, 2007, p. 2.

thousand fighters) declared war on the Philippine government and the non-Muslims on the island of Mindanao. This outburst of violence suggests that the MILF becomes more interested in terrorism when its democratic and/or power-sharing options break down. Peace talks between the GRP and MILF resumed in December 2009.¹⁰⁵ Both the GRP and MILF leaders have reportedly requested more direct U.S. involvement in the negotiations.¹⁰⁶

The GRP could seek a resolution of the conflict through one of three approaches, but all of them are complicated by issues of weak governance and political stalemate. First, the GRP could seek to apply additional pressure on the MILF through intensified counterinsurgency operations. The GRP has had difficulties sustaining large, disciplined security forces in the region, however, leading it to rely on “auxiliaries” or paramilitaries who have been accused of human rights abuses and other behavior likely to incite further resistance among locals.¹⁰⁷ Alternately, the GRP could focus on inducements, seeking to provide better public services to the historically underserved population of Mindanao. The delivery of such inducements in the past, however, has been hindered by corruption, inefficiency, and the concentration of government services among political patronage networks. Finally, the GRP could make political concessions to the insurgents, providing them greater control over their own region. In fact, the GRP has previously offered autonomy arrangements to the ARMM. Before the final signing, the deal collapsed over concerns that creating an autonomous region would threaten Philippine sovereignty and

¹⁰⁵Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—Southeast Asia, “Internal Affairs, Philippines,” 2010a.

¹⁰⁶Thomas Lum, *The Republic of the Philippines and U.S. Interests*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 3, 2011.

¹⁰⁷“Philippine Peace Deal ‘Unlikely,’” *BBC News*, February 17, 2010; United States Agency for International Development, “Philippines: Overview,” 2011; and Steven Rogers, “Philippines’ Democracy in Turmoil,” *OpenDemocracy.net*, August 16, 2005.

concerns among Christians and Muslims in Mindanao over their own political and economic interests.¹⁰⁸

Significant Characteristics of the Operational Environment ***Relevant Insurgent Characteristics***

The ongoing insurgency in the Philippines has made it more difficult for the United States to bring a durable end to terrorism in the region. This is due in large part to the adaptability and shifting alliances of the MILF, which—depending on the current state of negotiations with the GRP—has proven itself willing to cooperate with either the GRP or ASG and other terrorist groups. In recent years, the MILF has fractionalized into its more extremist splinter “base commands,” which have tended to ally with ASG and other extremist groups.

ASG’s fundraising activities have also posed challenges to the long-term strategic success of the OEF-P mission. ASG raises many of its funds through kidnapping-for-ransom operations, which can be relatively independently organized and conducted, and can sustain the group despite interdiction efforts and large-scale tactical and operational defeats. These resources cannot be cut off unless the GRP were to develop a strong law-enforcement capability in these regions. On the other hand, the lack of significant outside state support deprives ASG from a resource base that has helped many other insurgencies become powerful, well equipped, and capable of sustaining large numbers of insurgents. This small resource base combined with the close ties between the terrorists and separatist insurgents fuel this small-scale but persistent insurgency. The only way out of such an insurgency would be for the government to either co-opt the insurgents through political concessions or develop a greatly expanded policing capability in these regions. In either case, the conflict can come to an end only through better governance or the breaking of political stalemates that thus far have proven intractable.

¹⁰⁸ “The Philippines: A New Strategy for Peace in Mindanao?” Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, ICG Update Briefing, August 3, 2011.

Relevant Government Characteristics

The Philippine government's weakness makes it harder to win over local support and prevent support to terrorist groups. Corruption is rampant, election fraud and graft are not uncommon, political killings are on the rise, and government services are often poor and sporadic.¹⁰⁹ Related to this is the fact that the MILF and its offshoots frequently repeat demands for increased power sharing with the GRP, at least in the ARMM.¹¹⁰ There is indeed evidence that locals and the MILF become more interested in terrorism when their options for meaningful political participation break down.¹¹¹ The GRP has met each demand as much as it can, but the Philippine constitution prevents the government from giving Mindanao independent status. The government has nonetheless tried to do so before. In 2008, the government and the MILF negotiated an agreement that would have created a largely autonomous administrative entity within the Philippine state; however, opponents of the president and Christian politicians from Mindanao petitioned the Supreme Court, and later that year the court declared such a move unconstitutional.¹¹² Constitutional amendments are hypothetically possible but thus far have not proven politically feasible.

Results of the U.S. Intervention

The U.S. intervention has had numerous operational successes against ASG and JI and has decreased ASG by more than half and at least partly reduced JI's presence in the archipelago. The large nonkinetic component of the U.S. intervention has also helped win over local support to the government. Between 2002 and 2007, Liaison Coordination Elements (LCEs) of the JSOTF-P completed 165 Medical Civil Action Plans (MEDCAPs) at a cost of \$676,000, treating over 250,000 patients. Engineering Civil Affairs units worked with Philippine contractors to build Jolo Island roads, water drilling sites, schools, Basilan

¹⁰⁹Lum, 2011.

¹¹⁰Boot and Bennett, 2009, pp. 22–23; Palilonis, 2009, p. 13.

¹¹¹Boot and Bennett, 2009; Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 2010a.

¹¹²Lum, 2011, pp. 14–15.

Island wells, hospitals, and a host of other projects.¹¹³ These civilian-military operations have successfully won over increasing amounts of local support for the GRP.¹¹⁴

Despite these successes, ASG and JI remain active, and while their numbers are fewer, several hundred remain. Moreover, ASG and JI continue to exploit ties with the MILF and other Muslim separatist groups to remain viable, and these separatist groups have already sustained themselves for decades and show no indication that they are ready to give up their fight. Unless an acceptable political deal can be worked out or the GRP significantly extends its governance—including greatly expanded and more effective policing and service provision—into the Muslim periphery, this threat may perpetuate itself indefinitely. Dissatisfaction with the GRP has fueled popular support for ASG, winning the group recruits and sanctuary; therefore, the issue of poor governance lies at the heart of the U.S. goals for OEF-P. This challenge has been recognized by Colonel William Coultrup, the JSOTF-P commander in 2010, who emphasized that “[t]he goal is to set the conditions for good governance, and you do that by removing the safe havens of these terrorist groups and addressing the specific conditions that contribute to those safe havens.”¹¹⁵ Failure to secure this change in the underlying conditions means that military operations secure only a lull in the violence. Such a cycle happened before when the United States withdrew its forces from Basilan, leading to renewed violence in 2007.¹¹⁶

Conclusions

U.S. intervention in the Philippines through OEF-P is in many ways a textbook minimalist stabilization operation: U.S. troop commitments and military aid are very low, the operation focuses on building the AFP’s capacity, and both U.S. civilian and military instruments are

¹¹³Gabe Puello and Robert Smith, “LCEs in OEF—Philippines,” *Desert Warrior*, Vol. 6, No. 39, October 4, 2007.

¹¹⁴Puello and Smith, 2007.

¹¹⁵Boot and Bennett, 2009.

¹¹⁶Boot and Bennett, 2009.

used here. Moreover, many have cited this as a model case of minimalist stabilization, noting the operational successes achieved by the United States in routing al Qaeda–linked groups out of the Philippines archipelago.

Although these successes are real and important, their limits must be recognized as well. ASG and JI presence in the archipelago, while reduced significantly, still numbers in the hundreds after ten years of U.S. military operations. They have the ability to raise significant amounts of funding fairly independently through their kidnapping-for-ransom operations, and they are able to attract public support due to factors such as government corruption and weak and unequal provision of government services. Terrorist groups in the Philippines are also able to attract the support of the MILF at times, due to the weakness of the Philippines' democracy and the GRP's unwillingness to give in to MILF demands for power sharing. Further significant gains are therefore unlikely without changes in the underlying structure of the conflict. The U.S. mission in the region is unable to address these more pervasive problems because of its limited nature, and the GRP has thus far been unable or unwilling to resolve these issues itself. Hence, the prospects for the long-term strategic success of the mission are uncertain. Much as fighting resumed in Basilan after the United States withdrew its forces from the island, it may be that more than a decade of U.S. military operations will have purchased only temporary improvements.

Central African Republic, 1996–1997

The conflict in the CAR from 1996 to 1997 was the result of three mutinies of the *Forces armées centrafricaines* (FACA; the Armed Forces of Central Africa) in the country's capital, Bangui. These mutinies, in turn, were caused by a combination of economic distress and ethnic tension in the country. French forces prevented the overthrow of the government, and France organized a power-sharing arrangement and two multinational peacekeeping forces to stabilize the country in the wake of these coup attempts. Almost immediately after foreign troops

withdrew, however, the government of the CAR again faced a string of mutinies, ultimately ending in a successful coup.

The CAR exhibits a familiar pattern reflected in the other cases in this chapter: Intervention prevented the defeat of the supported regime, but it did not secure decisive results. This case suggests two additional warnings: Early intervention did not produce the results for which optimists often hope, and subsidizing host nation security forces did not serve as an effective alternative to foreign intervention.

Conflict Narrative

France, long a colonial power, maintained involvement in the CAR even after its independence in 1960 by maintaining a military base and subsidizing the wages of its former colony's armed forces.¹¹⁷ When France discontinued these subsidies in 1993, the government of Ange Felix Patassé was unable to continue paying its forces. Three years later, on April 18, 1996, between 200 and 300 FACA soldiers mutinied over the issue of pay arrears. French forces, including 1,300 soldiers and military advisors already in the CAR and an additional two units of paratroopers, supported loyalist troops, the presidential guard (the *Unité de sécurité présidentielle*, or USP), and President Patassé in Operation Almadin I.¹¹⁸ The unrest ended after three days, when France paid the soldiers their wages and President Patassé agreed not to start legal proceedings against the mutineers.¹¹⁹ The peace was short-lived however, with 500 FACA soldiers leading a second mutiny on May 18, 1996, refusing to be disarmed and denouncing the April 1996 peace agreement. French forces once again were called to Bangui (Operation Almadin II), supported by troops from Chad and Gabon. The

¹¹⁷ United States Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, "Background Note: Central African Republic," December 28, 2010.

¹¹⁸ Associated Press, "Violence in Central African Mutiny Appears to Be Easing," *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1996b.

¹¹⁹ IHS Jane's: Defense and Security Intelligence and Analysis, Internal Affairs: Central African Republic, 2011b.

second mutiny ended after ten days.¹²⁰ French troops were directly involved in the fighting when suppressing these mutinies, patrolling in tanks, gathering foreigners for evacuation, and—along with presidential guards—surrounding the presidential palace and government buildings in the capital. Although French military involvement quickly stemmed the violence, the French were unable to maintain peace for long. In November and December 1996, rebels accused President Patassé and his supporters of violently repressing the southern Yokoma ethnic group, using foreign mercenaries, and marginalizing the Army.¹²¹ A Franco-African summit sent a four-president mediation team to negotiate a cease-fire, which was signed in December 1996.¹²²

During the unrest, hundreds of antigovernment protesters took to the streets, denouncing the French presence in the country.¹²³ As part of its initiative to consolidate its African presence, France announced a reduction of its presence in the country in July 1997. By April 1998, France had shut down its military base in Bouar, outside the capital, and had removed virtually all of its troops from the country.

The Bangui Agreement, signed January 27, 1997, created a new national unity government, headed by a new prime minister (Michel Gbezera-Bria) and composed of members of both the ruling coalition and 11 opposition parties, as a transitional measure in a democratization process. It also created an Inter-African Mission on Intervention and Surveillance of the Bangui Accord (*Mission Interafricaine de Surveillance des Accords de Bangui*, or MISAB), to remain in the country for several years. A 500-member all-African peacekeeping force with soldiers from Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal, and Togo deployed under MISAB to supervise the accord.¹²⁴ Despite the peace

¹²⁰Joseph Havermans, "Central African Republic: Ethnic Strife in a Democratic Setting," *Searching for Peace in Africa*, 2000; IHS Jane's, 2011b.

¹²¹Havermans, 2000.

¹²²IHS Jane's, 2011b.

¹²³"Central African Republic Turns Against the French Protesters Denounce Intervention in Mutiny," *Baltimore Sun*, May 26, 1996.

¹²⁴"Central African Republic in 3-Way Peace Accord," *New York Times*, January 26, 1997; IHS Jane's, 2011b.

deal, fighting erupted between mutineers and MISAB in June 1997, followed by another cease-fire in July 1997. The U.N. Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) replaced MISAB in April 1998 and remained in the country until February 2000. Each successive mission provided the CAR with a window to enact wider-reaching reforms, such as a focus on providing basic services and improving government management, but the Patassé government seemed unable to take advantage of these opportunities.¹²⁵

Instability continued after foreign troops withdrew, and a mere 15 months after the departure of MINURCA, soldiers loyal to former President André-Dieudonné Kolingba mounted a coup against President Patassé. Like the other attempts, the coup was put down with foreign assistance, this time from Libya, Chad, and the *Front de Libération du Congo*.¹²⁶ Yet more coup attempts followed, ultimately leading to the overthrow of Patassé by his former army chief of staff General François Bozizé on March 15, 2003.¹²⁷ Seven years after the initial French intervention, the regime France had supported eventually fell, and it fell for precisely the same reasons as those that had initially provoked the intervention. The French government described the 2003 coup as “absolutely unacceptable” but has since resumed links with the country, providing sporadic logistical assistance following renewed rebellions in the CAR since 2006.

Significant Characteristics of the Operational Environment

Relevant Insurgent Characteristics

The fact that the mutinies kept recurring was driven in part by ethnic tensions between the mutineers and the president and his supporters, as these were not easily addressed by short-term cease-fires or even the remittance of back pay to the military.¹²⁸ The mutineers did not appear to have developed a robust organization by the time of French inter-

¹²⁵United States Department of State, 2010.

¹²⁶IHS Jane's, 2011b.

¹²⁷IHS Jane's: Defense and Security Intelligence and Analysis, Executive Summary: Central African Republic, 2011c.

¹²⁸IHS Jane's, 2011b.

vention, however, which explains the short duration of each individual mutiny. Nonetheless, the armed opposition enjoyed the support of at least a segment of the overall population, as evidenced by the antigovernment, anti-France protests during the May 1996 rebellion.¹²⁹

Relevant Government Characteristics

France had been subsidizing the CAR military's wages for years, and once it stopped providing those subsidies, the CAR government was unable to pay its soldiers. This case should therefore be viewed in the context of the country's dire economic situation as of the mid-1990s. The CAR saw a 30-year decline in per capita gross national product following its independence from France in 1960, and its debt burden remains considerable. The military went unpaid for approximately three years before the FACA soldiers mutinied for the first time in April 1996. This first mutiny ended once France provided funds to pay the soldiers' wages again.¹³⁰ Despite this remittance of back pay, unrest continued unabated; meanwhile, the CAR government's dependence on French support deepened.¹³¹

Results of the French Intervention

Despite rapid interventions that headed off a series of coup attempts before the fighting expanded into full-fledged civil wars, French support for its client regime ultimately proved futile. The underlying sources of the conflict—a weak economy, fiscal mismanagement, and ethnic tension between portions of the population and the president and his supporters—could not be resolved through either simple inducements (the provision of wage arrears by France) or force (French military support to the regime). Without broader reforms, the government was chroni-

¹²⁹“Central African Republic Turns,” 1996.

¹³⁰IHS Jane's, 2011b.

¹³¹Institute for African Development, *Profile: Central African Republic*, 2000.

cally weak.¹³² Within three years after the withdrawal of MINURCA, the government of President Patassé was overthrown.¹³³

The fact that the government was unable to pay the military's wages in the absence of French subsidies, as well as its immediate reliance upon French troops to put down the rebellions, made the government's dependence upon France appear to its citizens as a significant weakness. This stymied the government's ability to control its country and strengthened the opposition.¹³⁴

Conclusions

French intervention in the CAR mutinies during the 1996–1997 time-frame is an interesting case of a very small, quickly executed minimalist stabilization operation. Due to the permanent French military presence in the country, French troops became involved in each of the three mutinies almost immediately and quickly overcame the mutineers. They were not, however, able to broker a power-sharing arrangement that could endure. Nor did their attempts to subsidize the country's security sector yield durable results. Ultimately the weaknesses of the client regime were exposed as soon as French subsidies and military forces were withdrawn.

The case should serve as a warning for proponents of minimalist stabilization. Proponents often claim that preventive security assistance missions can be highly cost-effective by heading off conflicts before they metastasize and undermine the state altogether. Yet early intervention by the French did not produce the expected results. Proponents of minimalist stabilization also frequently claim that security force assistance is cost-effective because it is cheaper to subsidize foreign troops in developing countries than to deploy forces from developed countries. In the CAR this bargain ultimately failed. The French were unwilling to sustain their subsidies forever, and the client regime never developed

¹³²Associated Press, 1996a; "U.N. Families Flee Central African Mutiny," *New York Times*, December 7, 1996.

¹³³IHS Jane's, 2011c.

¹³⁴Randall W. Stone, "The Political Economy of IMF Lending in Africa," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4, November 2004, pp. 577–591.

the capacity to finance its own security sector. The eventual result was the collapse of the regime—but only after repeated French interventions to prop up its local ally.

If cases such as the Philippines and Colombia represent partial successes achieved at low cost, the CAR represents an important warning from the other end of the spectrum. Minimalist stabilization operations not infrequently achieve no appreciable gains. And in some cases, such as the initial under-resourcing of OEF-A, they may have disastrous results.

In Sum

The case studies of this chapter suggest two primary reasons why minimalist stabilization appears to stave off defeat but seldom is capable of securing victory. First, although it can strengthen host-nation security forces, it seldom is capable of transforming them into highly effective counterinsurgents due to the weaknesses of host nations' governments. Second, minimalist stabilization provides few capabilities with which to significantly improve the governance of host nations. These limitations do not prevent minimalist stabilization from ever being an effective instrument of U.S. foreign policy. They do, however, suggest that minimalist stabilization is no panacea. The final chapter of this study is dedicated to understanding the precise conditions under which minimalist stabilization is appropriate and the implications for U.S. defense policy.

Conclusion

Minimalist stabilization missions do not significantly increase a partner government's odds of victory in a counterinsurgency campaign, but they do dramatically reduce the probability of defeat. Minimalist stabilization typically yields operational successes that degrade rebel capabilities and make it unlikely that the insurgents can topple the government. Such missions typically do not, however, alter the underlying structure of the conflict. They usually do not help foster significant political reforms in the partner government. Nor are they typically able to cut insurgents off from their resource bases.

These dynamics suggest that the operational gains attributable to minimalist stabilization can usually be converted into strategic success only if the underlying political or international structure of the conflict can be altered. Military power plays a role, but the infrequency of victory suggests that the role of force is more about creating the framework within which a political process can operate successfully rather than *winning* per se. Such a conclusion may seem obvious to those familiar with the theory and practice of counterinsurgency or peace building. Too often, however, it has not been apparent to decisionmakers. The United States failed to pursue negotiations with any element of the Taliban after its defeat in early 2002 yet also refused to commit large numbers of troops to Afghanistan.¹ The results of this study suggest that such an approach was doomed to failure; yet, this conclusion was not obvious to decisionmakers at the time. Similarly,

¹ Michael Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009.

the United States pursued outright military victory in El Salvador in the 1980s through small-scale intervention, and it believed that the military prosecution of the counterinsurgency was separable from the political dimensions of that campaign.² More generally, policymakers of all intervening states consistently overestimate their chances for success.³ If nothing else, this study might serve as a corrective to such tendencies.

This assessment provokes three questions: (1) What is the value of minimalist stabilization? (2) what can be done to improve the chances of achieving durable, strategic success? and (3) what are the implications for U.S. defense policy, particularly for defense restructuring debates and partnership strategies?

The Value of Intervention

What is the value of minimalist intervention if it can improve the odds of avoiding defeat but can seldom secure victory? The answer depends on the context of the intervention. Although there is no single formula, a number of rules of thumb are evident from the preceding chapters:

- Avoiding defeat may secure at least minimal U.S. objectives if the loyalty of the client government is the United States' greatest concern. In El Salvador, for instance, the United States would have preferred to end the violence and would have preferred to institute a democratic system of governance. Ultimately, however, its greatest concern was avoiding the fall of another Central American country to Communism. It is debatable whether such an outcome was worth the costs of the conflict or whether such assistance could have been sustained indefinitely had the Soviet Union not collapsed, but the United States did achieve its core objective.
- Minimalist intervention on behalf of a government in an ongoing conflict may secure U.S. interests if the United States is not

² Carothers, 1991, p. 24.

³ Levite, Jentleson, and Berman, 1992.

opposed to a compromise that would offer the insurgents real political power and security guarantees. In some cases such a compromise can be secured through diplomacy alone. In other cases the insurgents will have to be convinced that they cannot achieve military victory before they will be willing to negotiate. In these latter instances minimalist intervention may shift insurgents' estimates of the likelihood of victory and the costs of continued fighting. Such a course of action, however, is viable only if the United States is willing to grant insurgents significant concessions. Historically the United States has been unwilling to grant insurgents such as the Taliban or the Salvadoran communists significant political power—at least until years of bloodshed proved that outright military victory was impossible. Intervening countries have also historically overestimated the likelihood that their interventions will decisively shape the decision calculus of insurgents.⁴

- Minimalist stabilization may be a useful instrument of foreign policy if a prolonged period of low-level violence is an acceptable outcome. Many observers have argued, for instance, that the geography of Colombia is such that the complete destruction of the FARC is impractical; instead, degrading and containing the insurgency is the appropriate goal. Although less than ideal, such outcomes may be something that both the United States and the partner government can accept. There are several insurgencies in India, for instance, that have already endured for decades, and their presence has not prevented India from becoming one of the most dynamic democracies in the world today. The critical question is whether an insurgency, once degraded and contained, will stay degraded and contained. Can minimalist stabilization push the insurgency past a “tipping point” where reconstitution of its capabilities is impossible even once the United States has withdrawn from the conflict? If not, then either the United States must commit to a semipermanent intervention in the conflict,

⁴ Levite, Jentleson, and Berman, 1992.

or it risks having done no more than temporarily ameliorate the problem.

- Finally, minimalist stabilization may be appropriate if there is little concern about the “externalities” of prolonged conflict. The consequences of civil wars tend to overflow the borders of the country at war. Civil wars are associated with refugee flows, the spread of disease, depressed licit economic activity in neighboring states, the flourishing of transnational criminal networks, the incubation of transnational terrorist movements, the spread of instability and conflict into neighboring countries, and a variety of other ills.⁵ Intervening states may be willing to accept such costs to maintain a partner government in power. Some have argued, for instance, that the value of targeted killings of terrorists in Afghanistan and the border regions of Pakistan is so great that the United States must continue to protect a partner regime in Kabul, even if the result is a prolonged civil war in the country. Such decisions should be made, however, only after careful consideration of the possible spillover effects.

Improving the Probability of Success

How might minimalist stabilization operations be conducted or combined with other instruments to improve the chances of transforming operational into durable strategic successes? Minimalist stabilization's odds of success might be improved through three means: carefully choosing the circumstances in which such interventions are launched, combining them with nonmilitary instruments to improve their effectiveness, and committing to stabilizing the eventual peace.

The analysis was not structured to provide a fine-grained understanding of the precise conditions under which minimalist stabilization would be most likely to succeed. Both the analysis here and prior research, however, suggest at least three contexts in which minimalist stabilization appears to be particularly effective:

⁵ Collier et al., 2003.

- Minimalist stabilization appears most likely to improve a government's odds of victory when both the government and the insurgents are weak. The only three cases in which minimalist stabilization arguably was critical to securing a victory for the partner state were the British and Iranian intervention in Oman; the Angolan intervention in the Republic of Congo; and the Moroccan, Belgian, and French intervention in Zaire in 1977–1978. In such contexts, small forces from outside may be enough to tip the balance decisively. Of course, strong states with the will to fight an insurgency are even more likely to do well. But this may be a case of intervention working best where it is least needed.
- Minimalist stabilization may be appropriate if there is a realistic opportunity to interdict insurgents' resource streams. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the international community quickly moved to secure the critical diamond-mining sites that had fueled that country's conflict. In the Bosnian civil war of the 1990s, some observers argued that interdiction of fuel convoys from Serbia would have seriously weakened the relatively mechanized Serb forces. In most cases, however, such interdiction is difficult or impossible, as the examples of Colombia and Afghanistan attest.
- Finally, minimalist interventions might be usefully targeted on states where a realistic path to a negotiated settlement is visible but requires outside intervention to secure. Although this study has not focused on peace operations, minimalist forces may be fully adequate to conduct consensual peacekeeping missions.⁶

The odds of success might also be improved by combining minimalist operations with nonmilitary instruments:

- As discussed above, a particularly promising path is to ensure that the armed opposition is denied the resources required for an insurgency. Many insurgencies ended rapidly—and the post-conflict periods remained highly stable—when insurgents lost

⁶ Dobbins et al., 2007.

outside state sponsorship.⁷ Such a path to conflict termination usually requires a diplomatic process in which the external powers with an interest in the conflict are able to secure their core interests in a negotiated settlement. Such diplomatic solutions, of course, are not always possible. Frequently, however, intervening states eventually find that an accommodation is indeed possible, but they reach such accords only after considerable bloodshed. Multilateral processes may also play a critical role in denying insurgents proceeds from “contraband,” such as the Kimberley Process, which was created to restrict the sale of “conflict diamonds.” Such multilateral initiatives have become all the more important in the wake of the Cold War, as insurgent movements diversify their resource streams, moving away from state sponsorship and increasingly toward criminal enterprises.

- The other potentially critical function for nonmilitary instruments is binding partner governments to critical reforms. Foreign assistance may provide a government with enough resources to alleviate internal pressures for reform but too few resources to enable fundamental changes. The result would be stagnation—a phenomenon commonly observed and criticized within the development community. There are a number of instruments that have been devised to try to tie assistance more closely to reform efforts, including embedding foreign personnel within the partner state’s government, setting up trust funds or other financial instruments that require certain standards to be met before money is disbursed, and so on. Perhaps most critical, however, is the credibility of the intervening state’s threat to “walk away” if key conditions are not met.
- Finally, the odds of a successful outcome might be improved by long-term commitments to the partner state. The fact that most minimalist interventions lead to stalemate or negotiated settlements—outcomes that are historically precarious and frequently lead to renewed fighting—suggests that the need for stabilization missions does not end with the end of conflict but endures well

⁷ Connable and Libicki, 2010.

into the post-conflict period.⁸ Such peace operations, however, are being almost completely ignored in the current defense debates.

Implications for U.S. Partnership Strategies

U.S. partnership strategies should reflect the potential and the limitations of minimalist stabilization.

Because lengthy post-conflict stabilization missions can place significant stress on U.S. forces, whenever possible the United States should seek to enlist other partners in such missions. Brigadier D. J. Richards described one promising model based on his own experiences leading forces in Sierra Leone. In these missions a large number of mostly lower-quality forces were combined with a small number of forces from Great Britain or France. The higher-quality NATO troops could either serve as a “maneuver force” capable of interceding in high-risk flashpoints themselves or help to organize local forces to do the same, while the remainder of the international troops provided the “holding forces” to stabilize other parts of the country.⁹ Such a model would reduce the expense of long-term, large-scale stabilizing missions and reduce the stress on U.S. forces.

Any time the United States helps to build the military capacity of other countries, it is critical that it put in place safeguards to ensure as best as possible that its assistance is not abused. Partner governments may be emboldened by American support to take inadvisable risks, as arguably was the case in the Georgian confrontation with Russia in 2008. Partner governments may also use their military capabilities for repression and even genocide, as was the case with the Hutu government of Rwanda, which had received French military assistance for many years. In interventions in which large numbers of U.S. ground

⁸ Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

⁹ See D. J. Richards, “Operation Palliser,” *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, Vol. CXXVII, No. 2, Autumn 2000, pp. 10–15. A similar approach was used in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

forces are present, such risks can be reduced—although not, of course, eliminated, as may be seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. In minimalist interventions these risks are elevated. The United States should make clear its “red lines” in such cases and make clear that there are extremely serious repercussions for violations of those limits.

Implications for U.S. Defense Restructuring

The findings of this study also have significant implications for U.S. defense restructuring debates.

There are so few instances of large-scale interventions that the ultimate outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan are likely to significantly affect how such operations are regarded. If Iraq stabilizes in the coming years, then it appears that large-scale operations provide significantly better probabilities of achieving minimally acceptable outcomes in the very worst environments than either small-scale interventions or no interventions at all—although the costs and the probabilities of even relative success are such that these operations should be considered only as a last resort. If, on the other hand, Iraq returns to civil war and Afghanistan continues to sink deeper into its own, then there will be very little empirical support for the claim that the United States can win even minimally acceptable outcomes from large-scale counterinsurgency missions.

Because there are many more cases of minimalist stabilization, we can make firmer claims about their likely effects. Where both the partner state and the insurgent forces are very weak, minimalist interventions may be sufficient to tip the balance in favor of a government victory. Overall, however, minimalist stabilization missions do not significantly improve the odds of victory and may even reduce them. They frequently yield operational successes such as the degrading of insurgent capabilities, but these operational victories seldom translate into durable strategic success without a more fundamental shift in the politics of the partner country or the international context.

What does this mean for the looming U.S. defense restructuring? Minimalist stabilization operations yield a reasonable chance of modest

success for a modest cost. In some circumstances such instruments are perfectly appropriate and indeed should be the preferred tools to realize U.S. foreign policy goals. But they are no panacea. In many cases military instruments should be avoided altogether. And in the worst environments, from the evidence currently available, it appears that only large-scale interventions provide a sizeable improvement in the odds of securing victory, and they greatly improve the odds of avoiding defeat.¹⁰ Where critical U.S. interests are at stake, the United States may again decide that such operations are the least-bad option. Such a conclusion is not meant to minimize the enormous costs—both monetary and human—of such operations, or to claim that the United States has finally “gotten it right” when conducting such operations. But it is meant to suggest that the United States would be accepting extremely high risk if it did not retain either the capabilities for large-scale irregular warfare or the ability to regenerate them quickly, even if it is all Americans’ fervent hope that they will not be needed again.

¹⁰ As discussed in Chapter Three, however, because the number of cases of large-scale interventions in the past four decades is so small, all generalized conclusions about them must be tentative.

Cases and Coding Notes

The elements of our dataset are civil wars or insurgencies (we use the terms interchangeably) that began in 1970 or later. The list of such civil wars was drawn from the dataset compiled by Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis.¹ It was updated to 2008 according to Sambanis' coding rules using data from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts dataset.

We code all variables for each civil war at two points in time: during the conflict and during the transition from war to peace (defined as the last year of the civil war and first year of the post-conflict period), although our analysis was focused on the conflict period. Table A.1 provides a list of all cases in our dataset, as well as critical variables for all cases. Explanations of each variable are explained in the remainder of this appendix.²

Level of Development (GDP per Capita)

GDP per capita data are necessary to calculate a country's level of development. GDP per capita for the conflict period was calculated by averaging GDP per capita for the case country for the three years prior to the onset of conflict. We used current millions of U.S. dollars from

¹ Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006b.

² For more detailed explanations, including case-specific coding decisions, please contact the authors.

Table A.1
Cases of Insurgency and Key Variables

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Afghanistan	1978	1992	Mujahideen, PDPA	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Large	Defeat
Afghanistan	1992	1996	Taliban v. Burhanuddin Rabbani	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	None	Defeat
Afghanistan	1996	2001	United Front v. Taliban	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	None	Defeat
Afghanistan	2003	2008	OEF I	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Defeat ^a
Afghanistan	2008	—	OEF II	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Large	Ongoing
Algeria	1992	—	FIS, AIS, GIA, GSPC, AQIM	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory
Angola	1975	1991	UNITA	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	Large	Mixed
Angola	1992	1994	UNITA	High	Yes	No	High	Moderate	None	Mixed
Angola	1997	2002	UNITA	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Victory
Argentina	1975	1977	Dirty War	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Azerbaijan	1991	1994	Nagorno-Karabakh	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	None	Defeat
Bangladesh	1974	1997	Chittagong Hills/ Shanti Bahini	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Bosnia	1992	1995	Rep. Srpska, Croats, Muslims	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	Large	Mixed
Burundi	1988	1988		Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Burundi	1991	—	Hutu groups v. govt	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Cambodia	1975	1991	Khmer Rouge, FUNCINPEC, etc.	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	Large	Mixed
CAR	1996	1997	Factional fighting	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Mixed
Chad	1980	1994	FARF; FROLINAT	Low	No	Yes	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Mixed
Chad	1994	1997	FARF; FROLINAT	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Chad	2002	—	MDJT	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Ongoing

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Colombia	1978	—	FARC	High	Yes	No	High	Moderate	Minimalist	Ongoing
Congo (Brazaville)	1993	1997	Lissouba v. Sassou-Nguesso	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Defeat
Congo (Brazaville)	1998	1999	Cobras v. Ninjas	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Victory
Croatia	1992	1995	Krajina, Medak, Western Slavonia	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	Large	Mixed
Djibouti	1991	1994	FRUD	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Mixed
Egypt	1994	1997	Militant Islamists (Gama'ah al-Islamiyah)	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
El Salvador	1979	1992	FMLN	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	Minimalist	Mixed
Ethiopia	1974	1991	Eritrean War of Independence	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Defeat
Ethiopia	1976	1988	Conflict in Ogaden (Somali border region)	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Defeat

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Ethiopia	1978	1991	EPLF, TPLF, EPRDF, OPDO	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Defeat
Georgia	1991	1992	South Ossetia	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	None	Defeat
Georgia	1992	1994	Abkhazia (& Gamsakhurdia)	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	None	Defeat
Guatemala	1978	1994	Communists; Indigenous	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory
Guinea Bissau	1998	1999	Vieira v. Mane mutiny	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Mixed
Haiti	1991	1995	Cedras v. Aristide	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Defeat
India	1984	1993	Sikhs	Low	No	Yes	High	Difficult	None	Victory
India	1989	—	Kashmir; Naxalites (CPI-M; PWG; MCC)	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	None	Ongoing
India	1990	—	Assam; Northeast States	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	None	Ongoing

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Indonesia	1975	1999	East Timor	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Defeat
Indonesia	1990	1991	Aceh	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Indonesia	1999	2005	Aceh	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	None	Mixed
Iran	1978	1979	Islamic Revolution	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Defeat
Iran	1979	1984	MEK	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory
Iran	2005	—	PJAK, Jondullah	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Ongoing
Iraq	1974	1975	KDP, PUK (Kurds)	High	No	No	Low	Benign	Minimalist	Victory
Iraq	1985	1996	Kurds; Anfal	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	None	Defeat
Iraq	1991	1993	Shiite uprising	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	None	Victory
Iraq	2004	—	OIF	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Large	Ongoing
Israel	1987	1997	Intifada; Palestinian conflict	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Mixed
Israel	2000	—	Fatah, PNA, Hamas	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Ongoing

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Jordan	1970	1971	Fedeyeen/Syria v. govt	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Kenya	1991	1993	Rift Valley Violence	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Lebanon	1975	1999	Lebanese Civil War	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	Large	Mixed
Liberia	1989	1990	Doe v. rebels	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	None	Defeat
Liberia	1992	1997	NPLF, ULIMO, NPF, LPC, LDF	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Large	Defeat
Liberia	1999	2003	Anti-Taylor resistance	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	None	Defeat
Mali	1990	1995	Tuaregs; Maurs	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Moldova	1991	1992	Transdniestria	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	None	Defeat
Morocco	1975	1991	Polisario	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	None	Victory
Mozambique	1976	1992	RENAMO; FRELIMO	Low	No	Yes	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Mixed

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Nepal	1996	1996	CPN-M/UPF (Maoists)	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Nepal	2000	2006	CPN-M	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Nicaragua	1978	1979	FSLN	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Defeat
Nicaragua	1981	1990	Contras & Miskitos	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Mixed
Nigeria	1980	1984	Maitatsine Rebellion	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Oman	1971	1975	Dhofar Rebellion	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	Minimalist	Victory
Pakistan	1973	1978	Baluchistan	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Pakistan	1994	1999	MQM: Sindhis v. Mohajirs	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Pakistan	2007	—	Baluchistan	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Ongoing
Papua NG	1988	1998	BRA (Bougainville)	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Defeat

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Peru	1980	1996	Sendero Luminoso, Tupac Amaru	High	Yes	No	High	Moderate	Minimalist	Victory
Philippines	1971	—	ASG, JI, MILF	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Ongoing
Philippines	1972	1992	NPA	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Russia	1994	1996	Chechnya 1	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Defeat
Russia	1999	2007	Chechnya 2	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory
Rwanda	1990	1993	Hutu vs. Tutsi Groups	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Mixed
Rwanda	1994	1994	RPF/Genocide	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Defeat
Senegal	1989	1999	MFDC (Casamance)	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	None	Mixed
Sierra Leone	1991	1996	RUF, AFRC	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Mixed
Sierra Leone	1997	1998	Post-Koroma coup violence I	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Defeat ^a

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Sierra Leone	1998	2001	Post-Koroma coup violence II	Low	Yes	No	High	Difficult	Large	Victory
Somalia	1988	1991	SSDF, SNM (Isaaqs)	Low	No	Yes	High	Difficult	None	Defeat
Somalia	1991	2002	Post-Barre war	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Mixed
Somalia	2006	—	Ethiopia	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Ongoing
South Africa	1976	1994	ANC, PAC, Azapo	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Defeat
Sri Lanka	1983	2002	Civil War I (Tamil Tigers)	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Large	Mixed
Sri Lanka	1987	1989	JVP Insurrection II	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Sri Lanka	2003	2008	Civil War II (Tamil Tigers)	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory
Sudan	1983	2005	SPLM, SPLA, NDA, Anyanyall	Low	No	Yes	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Defeat
Sudan (Darfur)	2003	—	Darfur	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Large	Ongoing

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Syria	1979	1982	Muslim Brotherhood	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory
Tajikistan	1992	1997	Popular Democratic Army; UTO	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Mixed
Turkey	1984	1999	PKK (Kurds)	High	Yes	No	High	Moderate	None	Victory
Uganda	1978	1979	Tanzanian war	Low	No	Yes	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Defeat
Uganda	1981	1987	NRA/Museveni, etc.	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Defeat
Uganda	1990	1992	Kony (pre-LRA)	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Mixed
Uganda	1995	—	LRA, West Nile, ADF	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Ongoing
United Kingdom	1971	1998	PIRA—Northern Ireland	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory
Yemen	1994	1994	South Yemen	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Victory

Table A.1—Continued

Country	Start Year	End Year	Conflict Name	Development Level	Contraband (Opposition)	State Support (Opposition)	Opposition Resources	Operational Environment	Intervention Type	Outcome
Yemen PR	1986	1986	Faction of Socialist Party	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	None	Defeat
Yugoslavia	1991	1991	Croatia/Krajina	High	No	No	Low	Difficult	None	Defeat
Yugoslavia	1998	1999	Kosovo	Low	No	Yes	High	Difficult	None	Defeat
DRC (Zaire)	1977	1978	FLNC; Shabba I & II	Low	No	No	Low	Moderate	Minimalist	Victory
DRC (Zaire)	1996	1997	AFDL (Kabila)	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	None	Defeat
DRC (Zaire)	1998	—	RCD	Low	Yes	Yes	High	Difficult	Minimalist	Mixed
Zimbabwe	1972	1979	ZANU, ZAPU	High	No	Yes	High	Moderate	Minimalist	Defeat
Zimbabwe	1983	1987	Ndebele guerillas	High	No	No	Low	Benign	None	Victory

NOTE: All abbreviations can be found in the Abbreviations list.

^a When an intervening country or countries had to escalate from a minimalist stabilization operation to a large-scale operation to avoid outright defeat, the insurgency was divided into two cases, one of minimalist intervention and the other of large-scale intervention, and the period of minimalist intervention is coded as a defeat.

World Development Indicators, rather than the more conventional purchasing power parity because the former body of data was more complete. GDP per capita for the transition period was calculated by averaging GDP per capita for the case country for the three years following the termination of conflict for conflicts that have ended. We did not calculate GDP per capita for ongoing conflicts, of which there were 16, since those cases were eliminated from our analysis. Again, we used current millions of U.S. dollars from World Development Indicators.

As a benchmark against which to compare GDP per capita for each case, we calculated the average GDP per capita for the World Development Indicators' (WDIs) "Middle Income," the average of all middle-income countries in the WDIs dataset. For the conflict-period values, we used data for the three years prior to the onset of each conflict, measured in current millions of U.S. dollars for consistency. For the transition period, we used data for the three years following the termination of each conflict.

To calculate the development level of each case during the conflict and transition periods, we compared each country's average GDP per capita for the three years leading up to the onset (or for the three years following termination) of conflict, and compared this figure to the average GDP per capita for the WDIs "Middle Income" index over the same three years. If the country's average GDP per capita was higher (lower) than the equivalent middle-income GDP per capita, its development level was coded as 1 (0).

Opposition Resources

We coded the opposition as possessing high resources (1) during the conflict period if it had access to either (a) contraband as defined by James Fearon or (b) significant external state support to the armed opposition, as determined by either the Regan dataset on interven-

tions or the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts dataset.³ If the opposition lacked both contraband and state support, it was coded as having low resources (0). During the transition period, the opposition was coded as having high resources (1) if it had access to contraband during the conflict period, on the assumption that with rare exceptions sources of contraband would not disappear when conflict terminated, or (2) if it enjoyed significant external state support during the transition period.

Operational Environment

We created a typology of operational environments for both conflicts and transition periods, using the four possible combinations of state development levels (high or low) and opposition resources (high or low). Both low levels of development and high levels of opposition resources are risk factors for the onset, continuation, and resumption of civil war. We then created three categories of operational environments depending on whether both, one, or neither risk factor was present.

1. We defined an operational environment that combined a high level of state development and a low level of opposition resources as benign from the state's perspective.
2. We defined an operational environment that combined a low level of state development and a high level of opposition resources as difficult.
3. We defined an operational environment that combined either (i) a high level of state development and a high level of opposi-

³ As defined by James Fearon, cases were coded where there was evidence from secondary literature of major reliance by the rebels on income from production or trafficking in contraband, such as opium, diamonds, or coca. Fearon did not code for all of the conflicts included in our dataset. For missing cases, we coded as a positive instance of contraband any conflict involving the same country and rebel group(s) as cases that Fearon had previously coded for contraband. Where precedent was unavailable, we conducted secondary research to determine whether the rebels relied on income from contraband, such as the types that Fearon earlier identified, e.g., narcotics and non-oil minerals. See James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004, pp. 275–301.

tion resources or (ii) a low level of state development and a low level of opposition resources as moderate.

Intervention Type

Interventions were compiled from datasets produced by Patrick Regan, UCDP/PRIO, and Doyle and Sambanis, updated to 2008 using the online edition of *The Military Balance* and the official UN Peacekeeping website.⁴ If any of the three datasets coded a civil war as having had an intervention, then an intervention was coded. Regan's coding of interventions constitutes a partial exception. Regan distinguishes between six categories of military interventions, but only three of them involve either the direct provision of ground forces or support for the host nation's ground forces. When coding an intervention on the basis of Regan's dataset, we code a "stabilizing intervention" as having taken place only if the intervening country either sent its own ground forces into the host nation or provided *both* military equipment *and* advisors.

We coded intervention type based on the ratio of intervening forces to the native population of the case country. Cases of insurgency where no foreign forces intervened on behalf of the government during the conflict period were coded as No Intervention. Those cases where foreign forces were present in a stabilization mission but did not reach even one-tenth of the doctrinal force-to-population ratio of 20 per 1,000 (i.e., cases where foreign force-to-population ratios were below 2 per 1,000) we coded as a Minimalist Intervention. Finally, those cases in which foreign forces exceeded a force-to-population ratio of 2 per 1,000 were coded as instances of Large Intervention.

Population data are necessary to calculate force-to-population ratios. The population figure for the conflict period was calculated on

⁴ Regan, 2002; Nils Petter Gleditsch, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Solenberg, and Håvard Strand, "Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 5, 2002, pp. 615–637 (additional details about the dataset may be found on the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset website); Doyle and Sambanis, 2006b; UN Peacekeeping, website, undated; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008.

the basis of the year before the war began. The population figure for the transition period was calculated on the basis of the year after the war ended. Data were collected from the WDI.

Troop levels refer only to the largest stabilization mission of a given period (conflict or transition) and not to any forces intervening against the government. A mission such as the U.S.-led intervention against the Taliban in 2001, for instance, was not a stabilization mission because it was not pro-government (although the intervention following the end of the war in 2001 was coded as a stabilization mission). Total troop numbers were calculated using data from a variety of sources—including the Center for Army Analyses' Irregular War Database, reports from the United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network, UN histories of UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations, some academic articles, and various media sources, such as *The New York Times*, the Associated Press, and the BBC.

Total troop numbers were calculated to include all multilateral forces working toward a single objective in the same span of time. But where there were different missions either working at different purposes in the same period of time or working in different periods of time, the largest total number of troops in one mission, in the same period, was taken and used to calculate the troops-to-population ratio. In other words, troops from different troop-contributing countries were aggregated only for the same type and period of intervention.

Large interventions were excluded from the data analysis phase, which compared the effects of minimalist interventions to the reference category of nonintervention. Cases of neutral intervention during the conflict period were not excluded from calculations of victory and nondefeat (Angola, 1992–1994; Haiti, 1991–1995; Rwanda, 1994; and Somalia, 1991–2002), but they were not coded as interventions because they were not intended to support the government, only to maintain peace.

Conflict Outcome

Conflict outcomes were coded on the basis of Connable and Libicki.⁵ As defined by Connable and Libicki, there are four conflict outcome codes: (1) government won, (2) insurgents won, (3) mixed, and (4) ongoing. The concept of victory in nonconventional warfare is admittedly imprecise. Most coding decisions were made by a team of researchers assembled by Connable and Libicki for a prior research project. Because the large majority of the cases were coded by researchers with no knowledge of our hypotheses, the opportunities for systematic bias in the coding decisions was reduced. A minority of cases were coded by members of our research team, usually because the Doyle and Sambanis dataset on which our analysis was based differed from that used by Connable and Libicki. In a handful of cases Connable and Libicki's coding decisions were revised because we felt that the facts did not support their decisions; these cases and the reasons for the revised codings are provided in the notes on individual cases.

A government wins (coded as "victory") by destroying the insurgent cadre or political structure or through legitimate political channels, though without conceding too much to insurgent demands. An insurgency can win (coded as "defeat") by overthrowing the government, successfully annexing independent territory, or achieving dramatic political success or recognition of minority or property rights. Connable and Libicki "separate a victory [for insurgents] from muddled or mixed outcomes by identifying only those insurgencies that effected a political, and thereby a social, upheaval through an existing process." Where the government survived but made significant concessions, cases were relegated to "mixed outcome." In this scenario, a campaign has clearly ended, but both sides benefited in some way. The difference between an inconclusive outcome and a more decisive one is inherently fuzzy. However, we coded instances where a secessionist region obtains *de facto* autonomy, is able to set up its own government and security forces, and enjoys quasi-official relations with other

⁵ Connable and Libicki, 2010.

countries as instances of defeat for the regime from which the region de facto seceded.

If a clear ending could not be identified, according to the Connable and Libicki coding, e.g. “some fighting continued but it was unclear whether the violence was tied to the insurgency,” then the case was labeled as an inconclusive outcome. As Connable and Libicki explain, this “category addresses both those conflicts that have ended with an indeterminate victor and several ongoing insurgencies that are nonetheless deemed statistically relevant for this study.”

Codes for this category were adapted from the Connable and Libicki dataset where the cases matched. All new coding decisions were based on Connable and Libicki’s guidance for what constituted victory. The following sources were used as the basis for the coding decisions: *Europa World Plus* (London: Routledge), International Crisis Group conflict histories (as of July 23, 2012: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/key-issues/research-resources/conflict-histories.aspx>), Project Ploughshares Armed Conflict Report, a database maintained by the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (as of July 23, 2012: <http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/countryindex.htm>), Princeton University’s Constitution Writing & Conflict Resolution database (as of July 23, 2012: <http://www.princeton.edu/~pcwcr/country/region.html>), GlobalSecurity.org, UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) Refworld (as of July 23, 2012: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain>), the Country Studies Series by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress (as of July 23, 2012: <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/>), the Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence (as of July 23, 2012: <http://www.massviolence.org/>), and archival articles from *The New York Times*, the BBC, and Reuters.

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